

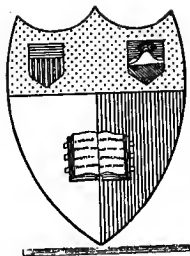


THE FIDALGOS  
OF  
CASA MOURISCA  

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JULIO DINIZ

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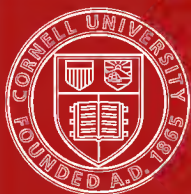
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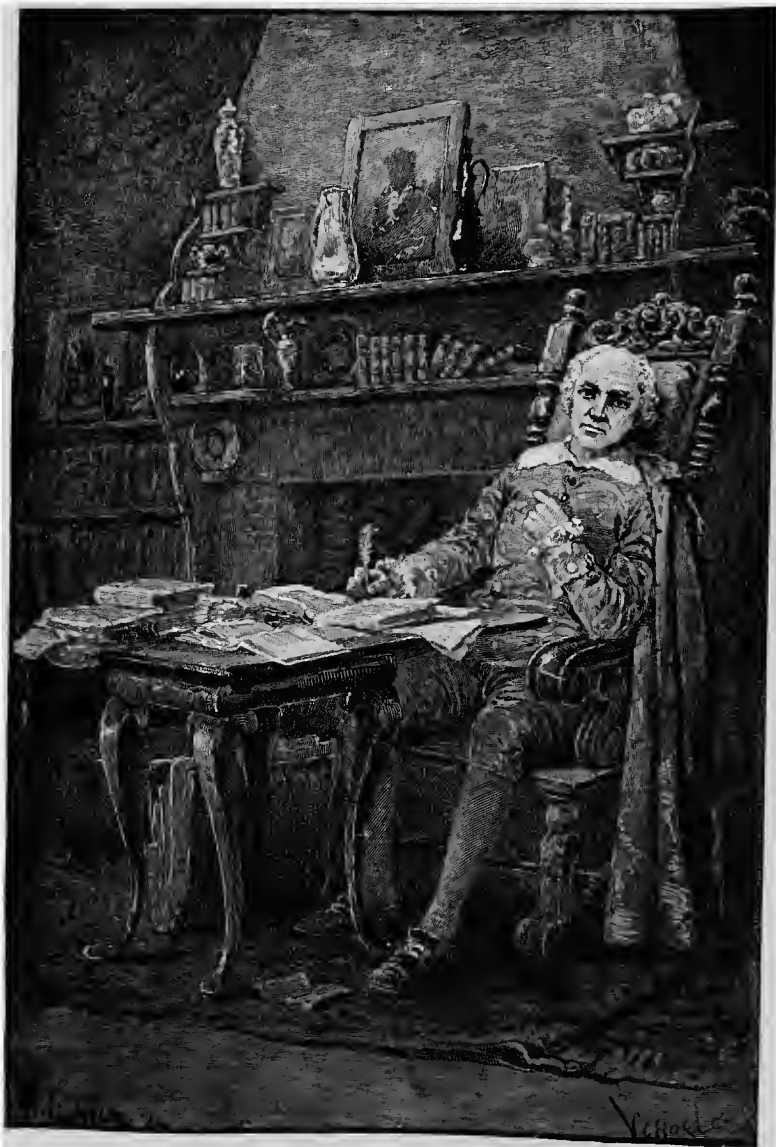
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DON LUIZ PREPARES TO ANSWER MAURICIO'S LETTER.







# THE FIDALGOS OF CASA MOURISCA

*FROM THE  
PORTUGUESE OF JULIO DINIZ*

TRANSLATED BY  
ROXANA L. DABNEY

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## PREFACE.

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JOAQUIM GUILHERME GOMES COELHO was born in Oporto in 1839. In 1856 he matriculated in the Medico-Surgical School, from which he graduated with honors in 1861. His over-sensitive nature, aggravated, undoubtedly, by the fatal malady which even in his student days caused him much suffering, prevented him from ever practicing his profession.

Two of his brothers had died of the same — pulmonary consumption — which may have accounted for the sadness of his first verses, published in 1860, under the pseudonym of “Julio Diniz.” In 1861-62 he published his first novel, “An English Family,” and from that period until his death, in 1871, he published various tales and romances — mostly of village life — which were highly appreciated, not only for their intrinsic worth, but because they offered a certain novelty to the Portuguese public, nationalizing, as it

## PREFACE.

were, the modern British romance, unknown in Portugal up to that period.

He has been criticised by some of his countrymen for his too great admiration for that school, but foremost among his admirers stands the great Alexandre Herculano; and two of his romances have been dramatized, and are among the Standard Plays of Portugal: the "Rector's Pupils," and the "Fidalgos of Casa Mourisca." This last he wrote in Madeira, in two successive winters, in which he vainly sought for relief from the disease with which he so manfully wrestled. It was while correcting the proof sheets of the "Fidalgos" that he finally gave up the battle — September 12, 1871. One of his contemporaries writes: "The soul of Gomes Coelho was as pure and ingenuous as the scenes he so delicately depicts. His spirit is embodied in his works and will live as long as we know how to appreciate the beautiful in art."

R. L. DABNEY.

1890.

# CONTENTS.

---

## CHAPTER I.

DON LUIZ . . . . .	9
--------------------	---

## CHAPTER II.

THE BROTHERS . . . . .	34
------------------------	----

## CHAPTER III.

THE HERDADE . . . . .	45
-----------------------	----

## CHAPTER IV.

TWO OLD MIGUELITES . . . . .	70
------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER V.

A DECISIVE STEP . . . . .	87
---------------------------	----

## CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST ENTERING WEDGE . . . . .	99
------------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER VII.

A NEW ADMINISTRATION . . . . .	111
--------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER VIII.

BERTHA . . . . .	130
------------------	-----

## CONTENTS.

### CHAPTER IX.

QUESTIONINGS . . . . .	148
------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER X.

THE TASK GROWS HARDER . . . . .	159
---------------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XI.

THE JUSTICE OF THE PEACE . . . . .	175
------------------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XII.

AN UNEXPECTED TURN . . . . .	191
------------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XIII.

BERTHA STILL . . . . .	198
------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XIV.

A LISBOËTA . . . . .	205
----------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XV.

SURPRISES . . . . .	218
---------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XVI.

THE FEAST INTERRUPTED . . . . .	230
---------------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XVII.

BACELLOS . . . . .	241
--------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XVIII.

RETALIATION . . . . .	255
-----------------------	-----



## CONTENTS.

### CHAPTER XIX.

UNABASHED . . . . .	270
---------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XX.

FEMININE DEVICES . . . . .	283
----------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XXI.

A PROPOSAL . . . . .	298
----------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XXII.

A DECLARATION . . . . .	306
-------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XXIII.

NEW DEPARTURES . . . . .	318
--------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XXIV.

A CONFESSION . . . . .	332
------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XXV.

ANNA DO VÉDOR . . . . .	343
-------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XXVI.

A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT . . . . .	357
------------------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BARONESS AGAIN . . . . .	370
------------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE DANGEROUS LEAP . . . . .	385
------------------------------	-----



# THE FIDALGOS OF CASA MOURISCA.

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## CHAPTER I.

DON LUIZ.

POPULAR tradition in Portugal, so far as it concerns the personal history of the kingdom, does not extend beyond the Arab dominion in the Spains — Spanish Peninsula.

The people know little or nothing of Celtiberos, Romans or Visigoths; but the idea is current among them that this country was inhabited by the Moors, and that only by the force of sword or lance were they driven by the Christians into Mauritania. The heroic figures of our kings and knights who distinguished themselves in the conflicts of those times have not yet disappeared from the oral traditions. They still live, illuminated by the same poetical light as the *Xacarás* (popular songs) and national romances, and at the principal

festivals of the year, where dances and games form the amusements in the public squares of the towns and villages, the people delight to recall the deeds of those historic times by mock combats between Moors and Christians.

The tales narrated by the fireside abound in charming pictures of the old Moorish life ; tales of the days of enchanted women and beautiful princesses who remained in the peninsula from those remote times awaiting the magic word which should put an end to their long captivity.

In different parts of the provinces the people speak with that seriousness which belongs to deep-seated belief, of buried treasures left by the Moors, in the hope of some day returning to possess them, and many have been the excavations undertaken with the avaricious desire of discovering any such. This same historical idea of the people has given rise to another fact ; any large mansion or family residence distinct in its style of architecture from the neighboring village houses, you will invariably hear called, if no memory remains of its foundation, "Mourisca House."

Such was the case with the house and estate of the Senhores Negroens de Villar de Corvos, known

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throughout all the adjacent country as the "Fidalgos of Mourisca House."

The reader must not imagine that the building possessed any features decidedly Arabic, which would justify the title, or that the hands of the sons of Hagar had laid the foundations of the noble edifice thus denominated. Its title of "Mourisca," in defiance of all protests of art, was owing solely to the small square towers, crowned by battlements, which rose from the four corners of the structure, to the arched doors and windows, to the narrow loop-holes opened in the walls, and generally to a certain air of a feudal castle which one of the ancestors of this distinguished family sought to impart to his seignioral residence.

No style of architecture had been scrupulously observed in its erection; the taste or whim of the proprietor alone presided in the design and execution of the work, therefore no artistic exigencies impose upon me the task of describing it in detail. In truth, however, whatever its architectural defects, or the incongruities or absurdities of the magnificent pile, no one, turning the last corner of the irregular road leading from the village, and brought suddenly in sight of its dark and impos-

ing aspect, rising in the midst of trees of centuries' growth, could withhold an exclamation of surprise, nor forbear stopping to contemplate it in its contrast to the white and smiling hamlet upon the neighboring hills.

The aspect of this residence was always melancholy; always majestic and severe, whether its granite front was gilded by the rays of the setting sun, or its battlements, seen by the morning light, traced their somber outline on the blue sky. Closer observation only strengthened this first impression. Time had not limited itself to tinting the ancient walls with the dark paints of its palette. Here and there a battlement or balustrade was thrown down; the cross on the chapel was mutilated; the stone work crumbling away on all sides, left wide breaches from which cropped out parasitical weeds, and this persistency of decay, betraying as it did the negligence or insufficient means of the present owner, excited in the mind of the observer a series of mournful reflections; and should curiosity prompt him to make inquiries in the neighborhood as to its occupants, he would find his first impression to be correct.

The present so-called "Fidalgos of Casa Mou-

risca," three in number, were Don Luiz, the father, a grave, taciturn sexagenarian, and his two sons — Jorge and Mauricio; robust, fine-looking young men. Jorge, the eldest, had not yet completed his twenty-third year. The history of this family is the usual one of the rich fidalgos of the provinces. Proud and improvident, little by little they allowed their property to become embarrassed by mortgages and ruinous contracts; the cultivation of the fields to languish, barns to go to ruin, cattle to die out, the fertility of the earth to exhaust itself, great, broad meadows to transform themselves into barren moorland, and the walls of the inclosure of house or barn to fall into decay.

The second son of one of the noblest families of the province, Don Luiz was destined by his parents for a diplomatic career, into which he entered under the protection and favor of the highest patronage at court.

Attached to different embassies in the principal capitals of Europe, the provincial nobleman acquired a degree of culture and a knowledge of the world, as well as a social polish, which he could never have obtained if he, like so many others, had been educated from childhood as the

“Morgado,” or heir — by law of primogeniture — to the estate.

When, therefore, by the death of the eldest son, Don Luiz came to succeed him as heir to the entail, he could consider himself — thanks to the occupations of his youth — as the best-informed and most accomplished landed proprietor of his province; and he was always regarded as such and treated with exceptional deference.

Even after the death of his brother, Don Luiz, accustomed to the life of the highest society and to the splendid elegance of foreign courts, did not abandon the career which he had adopted. Secretary of the embassy in Vienna, he married there the daughter of a Portuguese nobleman, who at the time, in the discharge of some political business, was residing in the Austrian capital.

At the first indication of the mighty revolution in Portugal, which was to alter the whole state of affairs, Don Luiz showed himself at once hostile to the rising movement, and resigning his diplomatic position, returned to his country to act an all-important part in the stirring scenes of that epoch.

From this step arose in great measure the do-



mestic trials which embittered the remainder of his life. His wife's relatives embraced the Liberal cause. Don Luiz, with party intolerance, completely broke off all intercourse with them, thus wounding the poor lady in the innermost sanctuary of her affections, and her heart was crushed between the strong and irreconcilable passions of those whom she equally loved.

With Don Luiz fractious rancor went even to the extent of persecution of his wife's youngest brother, who, impelled by youthful enthusiasm and sincere conviction, had espoused the side of the new ideas, which possessed such fascination for young and generous spirits. Over the handsome and daring young head hung the shadow of suspicion and political vengeance, and Don Luiz, blinded by passion, hesitated not to become their instrument. And this was the beloved brother of the wife whom he so idolized; yet neither her entreaties nor her tears availed to mitigate the bitterness of his hatred.

The rash young man found himself persecuted, imprisoned, tried and in imminent danger of expiating, as so many others had done, the crime of free thought by some terrible punishment. Almost by

a miracle he succeeded in making his escape. He left the country, to return later with that memorable expedition which opened in Portugal the heroic Iliad of her political emancipation. Equally ardent as pamphleteer or warrior, this young enthusiast did not live to see the triumph of his party. At the first rays of the Liberal dawn he so earnestly desired to welcome, he fell in one of the last and most obstinately-fought battles of that bloody conflict, riddled by hostile bullets, his last cry an enthusiastic shout of joy for the great cause on whose martyr list his name would thenceforth be inscribed.

His death brought mourning and gloom into the home of Don Luiz. The warm and loving heart of his unhappy lady received a fatal blow from which she never recovered; thenceforth her life was one of sorrow and tears. Peace was declared, the tree of liberty planted in the land, and Don Luiz, forsaking a court life, came to bury himself, his resentment and disappointment, in a remote corner of one of the provinces.

He brought with him a swarm of malcontents who were likewise incommoded by the sun of liberty, and who had resolved to seek consolation in

nature, far away from human iniquity. Thus the fidalgo's home was transformed into a refuge for many of his creed, who like himself were thoroughly disgusted with, and irreconcilably opposed to, the new social organization. A petty court was instituted in the village — a species of political club, which often attracted the notice of suspicious Liberals, and the threats of more excitable ones. Among them were to be found men of all conditions, and some of culture and scientific attainments. The hospitality of the fidalgo was magnificent; Don Luiz seemed to ignore or not to wish to know the price he was paying for it. Indifferent to everything, it might be said that he was even careless of the ruin of his own house which he was fast hastening.

The victory of the opposite cause; the death at short intervals of three children, who seemed to fall victims to some fatal sentence; fears for the lives of the others; the increasing sadness of his wife whose heart was crushed by all this hatred and conflict; at times a vague consciousness of his own precarious position, and, perchance, some remorse for the violence into which his passions had betrayed him — all these burdens had broken the

spirit of this once brave man, who became henceforth taciturn and morose.

An evident proof that he was troubled by remorse was afforded by the unwonted generosity with which he received and gave a permanent home to a poor soldier of the Liberal army who had been wounded in the late war while faithfully serving under the unfortunate youth against whom all the implacable hatred of the Royalist had been directed. The soldier came to deliver to the wife of the fidalgo a medal; the last token from her brother as he lay dying on the field of battle. He intrusted it to his comrade for her whom he so fondly loved. Don Luiz not only permitted the soldier to deliver it himself into the hands of his wife, but left them alone for a long conference, not wishing to restrain by his presence the natural longing she must feel to know every particular of the life and death of the lost one who had chosen for his emissary this faithful companion. His toleration did not end here. He saw without objection that the messenger lingered some days at Casa Mourisca, and, later on, he granted his wife's request, that the man might remain in their service in the place of the deceased gardener.

This insignificant fact exerted no small influence over the destinies of that family. The sons, brought up in the midst of this provincial court, developed under conditions which acted in an unlooked-for manner upon their juvenile characters. Teachers were not wanting; for there were plenty in that refuge of illustrious malcontents well fitted for the work. Thanks to these peculiar circumstances, the two boys were enabled to receive such an education as is most difficult to obtain in the retirement of provincial life.

But beside the instruction of the masters, who while grounding them in science sought also to imbue them with their political sentiment, to which they adhered as articles of faith, there were other lessons more unpretending, but perhaps more effectual; those taught by the mother and the veteran. The wife of Don Luiz was a lady of finished education and excellent good sense. She loved her husband, but saw with pain the excesses to which his prejudices led him. Reared in the midst of a liberal family, she sympathized with the new ideas, but knew how to guard them in her heart so as to avoid engendering domestic disputes.

In the intimate intercourse, however, between

mother and sons, this discretion was often relaxed, and the fidalgo's children were imbibing doctrines which their preceptors cursed as heresies; and, naturally led on by the source from which they derived them, they opened their hearts more readily to these than to the austere and somewhat pedantic precepts of their authorized instructors. In addition to which they so often heard their mother speak of the brother she mourned — of his generous sentiments, his noble character and his heroic devotion to the Liberal cause — that they, more especially the eldest, came to venerate this uncle's memory as that of a hero and martyr; to regard it as surrounded by a halo of legendary prestige; and for this, too, the gardener was responsible.

The old soldier was a living chronicle of the battles and skirmishes of those historic times, and an ardent panegyrist of his poor officer whose last sigh he had received.

The children felt themselves irresistibly attracted toward the companionship of the man in whose picturesque and highly-colored narrations they found a powerful fascination. Their interest was profoundly excited by the manner in which he

spoke of the labors of the emigration expedition, of the siege of Oporto, of famine, pestilence and war—all of which he had well known; of the battles in which he had participated; of the bravery of his master, and finally of the Emperor Don Pedro\* for whom the wounded veteran professed an almost superstitious veneration, and to whose person his highly-colored narration lent an epic and preternatural aspect. His listeners never wearied of questioning the witness to so many heroic deeds.

And thus were neutralized the doctrines of the erudite pedagogues charged with the education of Don Luiz's sons, who were now growing up inclined to liberal opinions. But there were days of greater trial in reserve for this family. The munificence with which the lord of Mourisca House maintained his voluntary exile obliged him to make enormous sacrifices. Don Luiz himself never took the charge of his estate. Faithful to the aristocratic habits of his predecessors, he left the cares of administration to his agents, from whom he received, from time to time, warning of the diminution of his resources, without

\* Father of the ex-Emperor of Brazil.

ever asking himself if it were not possible to avert this ruin.

Frei Januario dos Anjos, an old, half-educated ex-monk, who had taken up his permanent abode in this luxurious residence, was one of these agents.

In justice to the padre, it must be said that it was not in bad faith or for his own advantage that he accelerated the rapidly approaching ruin of Don Luiz. Being a man of limited intelligence and of no financial abilities, when in the most difficult crises he obtained funds for his patron, it was invariably under such conditions as left the property more heavily burdened than ever, and with a more hopeless outlook for the future.

What might have been expected came to pass. Don Luiz's court dispersed itself. Despite the efforts of the agents to maintain its ancient splendor the estate soon began to exhibit signs of decadence. It was the signal for disbanding. Some, delicately comprehending that their presence aggravated the difficulties with which their noble host was struggling; others, because they hoped for better times in distant homes less shaken by adverse fate—certain it is that all gradually retired and left the family to itself.



The fidalgo's taciturnity increased with the isolation. Then followed the illness and death of his wife who had been so faithful a friend to him, and who, to spare her husband annoyance, had even concealed the tears he caused her to shed. This new sorrow came to aggravate the burden of existence, and yet his trials ended not here; in the dregs of the cup remained the bitterest drop of all.

Don Luiz had at that time a daughter, the precious legacy of his wife, who seemed destined to continue her mother's mission of consolation in this world. What wonder that her father idolized her! The barren heart of the old man and the tender one of the child sought to mingle in one complete whole.

The aged noble, reserved and almost harsh with his other children, would summon the rare smile to his lips in the presence of Beatrice. The unhappy soul, withered and parched by hatred and passion, destitute of all other affection, felt a grateful refreshment in admitting the gentle influence and caresses of the girl who would kiss the wrinkled cheeks of her father and play with his silvery locks; and often, at such times, tears of relief would break out from the clouds of hatred and

anger which had so long darkened the spirit of the strong man.

But it was not the father alone who felt this influence. Jorge, who from childhood had been pensive and serious, was likewise impressed by the gentle and loving Beatrice. Child as she was, when alone with him, her earnest, thoughtful spirit harmonized perfectly with his own, while she seemed to comprehend the extent of the aid she might one day receive from the quiet boy gazing so thoughtfully upon her, and he grew more matured as he realized that it might be his mission on earth to watch over that angel sister.

The more impetuous, hasty Mauricio, bent his wayward will also to the least sign of the fragile creature who would burst into tears at many of his wild escapades. The sight of her tears had power to control or check him. And it was even through this fondly loved child that God smote the venerable fidalgo.

Delicate flower! With one breath Death gathered her, with the smile still upon her lips, and laid her in the quiet tomb.

Then fell dark night upon the father's soul. With the disappearance of that little household

fairy how changed became all life. The being who had absorbed every thought of those three men, to whom they had given their purest affection and constant care, had gone from among them, as if the light which illumined their path had been all at once extinguished, leaving them bewildered and uncertain, as men upon whom sudden blindness had fallen.

After the violence of their first grief had subsided there lingered still the *saudade*,\* which in Don Luiz became a concentrated moroseness, in Jorge a settled melancholy, and in Mauricio, more demonstrative vehemence. To each the name of Beatrice — the recollection of her ways, her words — was a talisman, the efficacy of which was never lost. Her angel spirit seemed ever present in the home where she was mourned, and all unconsciously obeyed its mystic guidance.

Thus, though dying in her seventeenth year, Beatrice still lived in the places she had once known. There are such beings, whose posthumous influence gives them a *quasi* immortality; like the sidereal light which continues to glow long

\* An untranslatable word, which means more than yearning; a tender memory.

after the source from whence it emanated has disappeared.

Padre Januario now became the indispensable and sole companion of Don Luiz, who saw in him the only representative of his former court. A violent partisan of absolute government, he was, notwithstanding, incapable of framing a serious argument in its defense, and passed his time in collecting the most absurd examples and justifications of his anti-liberal opinions; an artifice whereby to flatter the passions of his illustrious patron, and by which he fed the sacred fire. The ex-monk found himself greatly at his ease in that monotonous life, which exercised upon him the most satisfactory effect. It might be said that his time was divided between the occupations of eating and awaiting impatiently the hours of meals.

There was one cloud, however, in the padre's sky; this was the presence at Casa Mourisca of the gardener whom we already have mentioned, and who was openly hostile to him. It exasperated him to hear the *ci-devant* soldier speak of the emperor, of the siege of Oporto, of the volunteers, the Queen and the Constitution, with his accustomed and eager enthusiasm. Not infrequently the

two would break out into scenes of violence, when the chaplain would recommend the aged fidalgo to dismiss that man who bid fair to infect the whole family with liberalism. But Don Luiz, although he held no speech himself with the gardener, took no notice of the padre's complaints. In retaining the man in his service he was fulfilling his wife's request, and he had neither the wish nor the independence to act differently ; and thus the conflicts between the two became perpetual; the administrator detesting the rude frankness of the soldier, and the latter resenting the covert taunts of his foe.

Such was the condition of affairs in Mourisca House at the time our story opens.

It will be seen how ill-assured was the future of the young sons of Don Luiz ; the education they had received had no practical end in view. The father rejected the idea of his sons entering any profession. The noble career of arms, which was the most suitable, was closed to them by the late political events. The scions of the ultra monarchists, the Negroens de Villar de Corvos would not demean themselves to receive a salary for defending principles and institutions which had shaken the old thrones founded on divine right. Noble

also was the ecclesiastical career which many of his ancestors had embraced leaning on the episcopal staff, but Don Luiz was persuaded that there was no longer any religion in this land of former believers, and Frei Januario, taught by the disappointment of long-cherished pretensions to the honor of red stockings, obstinately maintained that only a Freemason would ever be advanced to the clerical ranks. And thus the youthful descendants of the old Royalist passed their time riding about on horseback, hunting in the vicinity and enjoying in idleness a life whose thorns every one strove to conceal from them, journeying by a flowery path toward a deep abyss hidden from their view.

But it must be said that the brothers were not equally unprepared. From childhood they differed greatly in character, and day by day this disparity became more marked. Jorge, the eldest, in infancy as in youth, was always grave and thoughtful. In their plays he would select the serious parts. He was the father, the teacher, the commander, the doctor, the priest — anything requiring a sobriety and dignity of deportment. As a boy, the village girls had received from him the most deferential treatment, and they, accus-

tomed to this youthful dignity, addressed him as they would an elder, and spoke of him with respect, sure of finding in that silent young man a protector and friend, but never a lover.

And yet Jorge's graceful figure, the bright and intelligent expression of his fine countenance, and a certain fire in his eyes, denoting energy of character, attracted many a feminine glance to him as he passed with a book under his arm, or on horseback through the country roads.

Men of Jorge's temperament often conceive a kind of dread of woman, holding themselves aloof from this mysterious being from whom unknown dangers may proceed. Of Mauricio, on the contrary, it would be difficult to say at what age he began his first love-making. Even in his juvenile sports, there were mingled representations of gallantry, with all their accompanying piques and jealousies. And from that time on his heart was never unclaimed, though at no period so completely absorbed as to allow him to pass any female beauty without a smile and a compliment. He was exceedingly popular with the girls of the village, who all knew him, and each of whom he knew by name.

Jorge spent much of his time in reading ; the home library was well supplied. The mother's cultivated, literary taste and excellent judgment had enriched it with some of the best models of both ancient and modern works, foreign as well as national. He also read in secret the few remaining books left by his deceased uncle, and cherished by the gardener as precious relics snatched from the *auto da fé* to which they would inevitably have been condemned by the indignation of the fidalgo and priest. Through these works he learned to reflect ; to comprehend the aim of certain ideas and institutions, and to estimate fairly many of those prejudices which had been imposed upon him as dogmas. By a spirit so thoughtful and observant, the numerous indications of the decadence of Mourisca House could not remain long unnoticed ; and there were times when a secret apprehension regarding his precarious future would enter his mind.

The more imaginative Mauricio, with his ardent temperament and volatile character, lived his life of a young provincial noble ; followed the current of his easy loves, his pleasures and his dissipations, allured by the dreams and chimera of a fertile



fancy, never allowing his vision to penetrate the obscure depths of reality. His reading was confined to romances and poetry. With reasoning powers inactive from indolence, he did not, or would not, see the specter which presented itself before his brother's eyes.

To one circumstance in particular was owing the appearance of that specter to Jorge, which, like the ghost of the King of Denmark in Hamlet, was exercising a profound influence upon the youth. This circumstance was manifest not only to him. The stranger whom we have imagined as pausing to contemplate the time-worn façade of Mourisca House, could not have failed to observe the same.

At the foot of the hill opposite that on which the fidalgo's home reared its castellated towers, was situated the most cheerful and prosperous house of the whole neighborhood. It was a perfect rural residence, called by courtesy "Herdade,"\* and the contrast between it and the old manor was most striking; the former smiling and bright, the latter severe and somber. On the one side every sign of life and industry which turns all to profit, neither sleeping nor resting — economy,

\* Inheritance.

thrift, a future ; on the other, a past ; barren tradition, silence, neglect, waste and ruin. For every stone which time dislodged from the palace, a corresponding one was placed at the foundation of some new building at the Herdade ; here a pavilion fell to ruin, there arose a barn, a water-mill, a winepress. In contrast with the old oaks, the vigorous ivy, the velvety moss, the parti-colored lichens — somber ornaments assumed by the aristocratic ruins — the Herdade displayed productive orchards, waving cornfields, green meadows, fertile vineyards, and, near the dwelling, beds of roses and balsams, where bees gathered sweet honey for the adjacent hives. In the roomy stables of the palace where dozens of horses of purest breeds formerly neighed, there still remained to beat the stone floor with impatient hoof two old roadsters of good blood whose sacrifice economy had not yet exacted ; in the unpretentious stable of the farmhouse two powerful mares, good for all work, and which could be ruled by a child, were bridled at well-filled mangers, or sent on long and frequent journeys, and at nightfall, droves of cattle entered the farmyard, whose lowing reached even to the height of Mourisca House, where the old man

listened to them in pensive mood, the past ever recurring to him.

It was this contrast between the two estates which raised in the mind of Jorge the reflections that so saddened him; for the owner of the Herdade had been a poor man in the fidalgo's employ. Leaving that, he had hired a small farm, later on a larger one, finally becoming himself a proprietor, and in a short time possessor of an extensive property, until now he was the head of a large family, and perhaps the most eminent agriculturist in all that district. Why did the Herdade prosper and the castle decline? If with so little so much had been acquired, how could so much have dwindled away?

Such were the reflections that weighed upon Jorge's spirit, when, from his window in the tower, or from some neighboring eminence, he witnessed the activity and animation on the premises of his former servant, and then turned his glance upon his old ancestral home lying in almost the gloom and silence of death.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BROTHERS.

IT was a September day, clear and serene; Jorge started forth, sauntering listlessly over pastures and meadows, following the narrow path, with difficulty obtained from the grasping agriculturist, along the banks of the village stream. Reaching a small ascent he paused to contemplate the fertile valley stretching itself at his feet, at the bottom of which stood, mid surrounding orchards and pastures, the Herdade already described. He seated himself on one of the enormous blocks of granite scattered all about the hills, and with which that region abounds — as if hurled there by the hands of giant slingers engaged in mortal combat. His eyes, instinctively turning to the Herdade, were riveted by what they saw there. It was the period of greatest activity on the farms: grain-piled threshing floors shone yellow in the sunlight; creaking carts, harvest-laden, entered through open

gateways; beyond were grouped haystacks and the débris of recent corn-huskings, like tents on a camping ground; pairs of oxen freed from the yoke reposed from the labors of the busy day, peacefully ruminating; young men passed to and fro in their various avocations, and from every side arose the hum of toil, reaching, through the still air, the ear of the thoughtful watcher above. The master of the Herdade, the former servant of Casa Mourisca, presided over all, while around him gamboled two robust children, playing with a large mastiff.

Deeply absorbed in contemplation of this scene, Jorge was suddenly aroused by the sound of approaching footsteps—in this place where he had unconsciously passed his whole morning! Turning, he beheld Mauricio, who, in full hunting costume, with all the elaborate finish in smallest details habitual to him, was mounting the hill preceded by two or three dogs of fine breed. Catching sight of Jorge they came barking and leaping toward him, jumping upon him in their delight.

Mauricio, guided by his dogs, drew near, exclaiming in a jovial tone, while some paces off, “Caught in the flagrant act of poetic musing,

Jorge! Bravo! I do not despair of seeing you a poet yet."

Jorge answered with a shrug of the shoulders: "He who mounts a hill without stopping may seat himself at the top, simply with the prosaic intention of taking breath. If this be a poetical symptom" —

"Well, yes; but you see climbing a hill with empty hands, as you have, without a gun as a reasonable pretext, is a noticeable symptom. Who takes the trouble of such a climb for a view which is no compensation for his labor? And who but the poets find a reward in it, since they only know —

— 'ce qu'on entend sur la montagne,  
Avez vous quelque fois calme et silencieux  
Monté sur la montagne en presence des cieux.'"

While reciting the opening lines of the poem he seated himself beside his brother, and, removing his hat, shook out his rich, beautiful chestnut locks, on which he bestowed so much care. The dogs roamed restlessly in and out of the heath and gorse bushes around them.

Suddenly interrupting his quotation, Mauricio continued, "What obstinacy to remain so cold in

the presence of all this magnificence! Why scruple to declare it beautiful? See that cleanly cut opening in the hill yonder; it seems purposely done to allow a view of the distant village, whose name I know not, on the plain beneath. And the steeple and the churchyard! Whose was the happy inspiration to place it so well? It could not be better; one would think an artist's taste must have directed the whole thing." And, he added with a sigh, "Ay, the scenery and the village are well enough — there is not much fault to be found with that — but the actors and the comedy they perform are insipid enough!"

The urban instincts of Mauricio, whose tastes could ill accommodate themselves to the simplicity of village life, made him long for the excitements of the Capital, and frequently vented themselves in such exclamations. .

Jorge, who listened to his brother in a sort of half-abstraction, without turning his eyes from the Herdade, answered, smiling, "I have been here quite an hour, and I swear to you that I had not noticed one of the features in the landscape which you describe."

"You prefer to contemplate it as a whole.

Well, that belongs to the poet; to analyze minutely is not his forte."

"There again you mistake; it was not the entire landscape I noted, but a limited spot in it—a very limited one."

"Which was it, then?"

"Look down at Thomé's Herdade; see all that activity; every one at work. Note the life there!"

"O, nonsense!" exclaimed Mauricio; "that is just what would not attract a moment's attention from me. Am I not saying that what is the most insupportable to me in the country is the people who inhabit it and the life they lead? One cannot but regret that Nature has such spectators for all these beauties. With what indifference these barbarians regard it all! Look! do you see that clown crossing the bridge down there? Does he turn his eyes on either side or halt for a second to admire the beautiful panorama that presents itself? The savage! Ask Thomé and all those people down there how often they have admired a moonlight night from some hill, or if a sunset produces any other sensation in their souls than the thought that it is near supper-time!"

Jorge smiled as he listened to his brother, and



said quietly, "What a fellow you are! Poetry requires some one who can understand it and can create it; and please remark that it is not always those who understand that can create, nor those who can create who understand it. These rude country people form an integral part of it; they do not contemplate it, they complete it. What would you have? Would you prefer that instead of these unconscious laboring folk, these mountains, valleys and streams should be peopled by admiring poets like yourself? You must confess it would be a somewhat absurd country. What makes the rustic poetical is his unconsciousness."

"Seen at a distance. At least you will agree in this; seen at a distance, and very distant."

"Seen at a distance! who questions that? like everything else. Close to, many of those meadows are ill-smelling marshes; unhealthy and infested with noxious insect life in that verdure you so much admire. Answer me one thing, Mauricio; do you think our old family mansion mars the beauty of this scene?"

"Mars it! What an idea! It adorns it; see how it stands out against that background of chestnut-trees."

“Very well; and yet on nearer approach you find sad and prosaic realities,” said Jorge, with a sigh. To the strange look with which his brother regarded him on hearing these words, Jorge replied by, “Yes, Mauricio, a sad and prosaic reality to one who looks at it reflectively. There is nothing sadder than those fields overgrown with nettles, those neglected orchards and ruinous barns. Do you choose to find poetry in our poverty, Mauricio?”

“Poverty!”

“Yes, poverty. What name would you give it? Compare the aspect of that white house of one story down there, with our castellated edifice; the activity of those men with the chronic lethargy of our chaplain, and compare, too, Mauricio, the unconstrained cheerfulness of Thomé with our father’s inconsolable melancholy.”

Mauricio bent his head, and a shade of gloom rested for a moment on his habitually unclouded brow. It might be said that for the first time the reality of life was laid bare before his eyes, hitherto fascinated by the glamour of flattering illusions. But after a few minutes’ silence he turned to his brother: “Well, be it as you say; I even recognize the truth. There is wealth; on our side there is

poverty, but romance ; oh ! leave us that, for you well know that is not the usual companion of opulence."

"Of idle, egotistical, useless riches, certainly not ; but of active, beneficent wealth which scatters seed far and wide, which promotes life around it, which encourages labor, brings waste land under cultivation, fertilizes barren soil, maintains, educates and civilizes a people, oh ! of a surety there you find poetry also. If that decaying castle has enough of poetry to start the tears of yearning regret, certainly the actively managed and prosperous farm has quite enough to arouse enthusiasm and faith in the future."

Mauricio remained silent for a time ; then, as if wishing to shake off the sadness evoked by his brother's words, he exclaimed, rising to his feet with affected carelessness :

"You are mistaken, Jorge. What rules down there is not poetry, it is — it is — thrift. Poetry is not found in newly-raised buildings, but in one that is going to ruins ; it prefers mosses to limestone ; it is in the melancholy past that you find her ; that is the air that suits her ; and she is right ; the future has too much of life to require

poetical prestige. Poetry of utilitarianism! What an idea! I don't know who it was who spoke to me sometime since of a curious notice he had seen respecting England. It seems that the industrial and economical spirit of that nation is destroying forests and groves to such an extent that the joyous chorus of birds will soon be silenced; flocks which formerly pastured in green meadows, are now prosaically fattened in stalls, and so on; rural song and music will be superseded by the roar of machinery and the shriek of the steam-whistle. Delightful change! In place of the white, transparent smoke arising from the peasant's hut, the heavens will be obscured by dark clouds of coal smoke. Ah! what a model for a country village comes to us from England! Poetry indeed!"

"What are you talking about?" interrupted Jorge. "Of agricultural England? But there indeed the poetic side of rural life is well understood, for even the nobility do not despise it. I have always understood that the lords and their tenants fraternize and mutually assist one another, and that the labors of each season are succeeded by popular festivities, participated in by all, as all

toiled to improve the estate in every way. You must confess that there is more poetry in the seigniorial customs of the English noblemen, who themselves direct their agricultural improvements, than in the ruinous estates of our landed gentry, in whose ancient halls the proprietors sleep the sleep of idleness and ease."

"I do not deny that, but in our house, in Casa Mourisca, there is something of poetry — of elegiac poetry, if you will. What you speak of may be poetry of the Georgics; but leave me that of the elegy."

"The worst of it is, Mauricio, that the day may come when the tremendous prose of complete poverty may dissipate this delicate aroma you talk of."

"Oh! have done; you are in a Cassandra-like mood to-day. Jorge, do cease; remember it is said that on our estate is buried treasure, of the time of the Moors, and that some day one of our family will discover it and become fabulously rich. Let that hope dispel the dark humor which possesses you. Come along; take that gun and shoot something. It is best to scatter visionary forebodings."

"I am not in the mood for sport to-day."

"Are you going to remain here and resume the thread of your cogitations?"

"No; I am going to join them there."

"Going to the Herdade?"

"I am."

"What to do?"

"To take a nearer view of that poetry, or that prose, as you will."

"You know our father does not like us to associate much with Thomé."

"I know; but that is prejudice; he will not know."

"Prejudice! capital! you are in a very philosophical vein to-day, Jorge. Good-by! I hope to see you at dinner in a better humor."

And the brothers separated; Mauricio, preceded by his dogs, took the direction of the mountains, Jorge descended the hill and followed the road leading to the Herdade.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE HERDADE.

THOMÉ DA POVOA was a perfect type of a farmer.

*“Mens sana in corpore sano.”*

This quotation best describes him.

Physically, he was the embodiment of strength and health; morally, of uprightness, hopefulness and good humor. He never rested while others worked. A morning sleep, or an after-dinner nap, were luxuries unknown to him. And in his days of plenty, he observed the habits of less prosperous times. In fact he superintended his work throughout. Before breakfast he made an inspection of the entire place, and in the course of the day he mounted his horse and looked after some more distant property which he was unwilling to leave to the discretion of underlings; once or twice a month he extended his excursions as far as Oporto, on business connected with the farm.

Strictly exact in his accounts, punctual in his payments, honest in his contracts, his credit was not confined to his village alone. In certain transactions his name in the city was a better guarantee than that of many an opulent merchant.

In his family he was a good husband, a gentle father. His household care lightened every burden and dispelled every sorrow.

Thomé was presiding over different occupations in which his laborers were employed when Jorge reached the Herdade. There were no idle hands there, no aimless effort, and in industrial affairs no distinction of sex or age. From infancy all had been familiar with work, and with attendance among the cattle. It is only in cities that the powerful and gentle oxen frighten women and children. In the country they caress and guide them.

In the fields and barns of the Herdade, all worked, talked, laughed and sang with a will, and Thomé was the center of all the life and movement; giving here a word, there the aid of a strong arm; while at the house door, taking her part in the rustic scene, stood the fair and worthy wife of the farmer, faithful companion of all his pleasures and



pains. In her arms she held their youngest born; the older children played at hide and seek in and out among the busy throng.

“O, Thomé!” she exclaimed, “see who comes there.”

The farmer turned, and his eye rested upon Jorge approaching from the outer gate. He had come, as he told his brother, for the purpose of obtaining a nearer view of what had attracted his notice from the hill.

The fidalgo's sons seldom visited the Herdade. For the old noble could not reconcile himself to the prosperity of his former servant. The farm was an emphatic censure upon his own improvidence; a silent rebuke, humbling his pride and filling his heart with remorse.

Thomé did not resent it, neither did he presume upon his prosperity; on the contrary, he maintained toward the family of Casa Mourisca, and especially Don Luiz, a certain deference and respect, suggestive of his former position in the fidalgo's household.

But the latter seized the first opportunity of breaking off all intercourse with Thomé. A question of water supply connected with the opening of

a spring on the Herdade property afforded the pretext. Don Luiz, who was generally very indulgent in disputes of the kind, on this occasion showed himself jealous of his traditional rights, and notwithstanding that no animosity existed on the farmer's part, from that time Don Luiz ceased all intercourse with him, and Jorge and Mauricio, who were in the habit of frequenting the home of the man who had carried them in his arms in infancy, received orders to go there no more. Thomé da Pova, although wounded by this treatment which he had not deserved, had yet sufficient penetration to divine the true cause of his old master's irritation. He remarked to his wife, with a shrug of the shoulders, "Well, what's to be done? So he was born and so he will die."

Jorge's appearance, therefore, somewhat surprised him, but he welcomed him with outstretched hands and smiling countenance.

"Come in, Snr.\* Jorge, come in! All is disorder here, but you know it is a farmer's domain, and in September cannot but look somewhat untidy. Luiza, send out a chair here — but stay, it is better to go into the house."

\* Snr. is the Portuguese abbreviation for Senhor.

“No, Thomé, I prefer to be here. Do not disturb yourself. Look! I am already seated on this cart.”

“No, no! that must not be.—Then send the chair, Luiza.—Will you take anything to drink, Snr. Jorge?”

“Thanks, Thomé; I am not thirsty. I felt a desire to take a nearer view of all this work which I have been watching for nearly an hour from that hill yonder, and so I came down.”

“Well done, to be sure! You are most welcome. I am always delighted to see you young men whom I knew as little chaps like these,” and he patted the heads of the children, who now were clinging to him, and curiously watching Jorge.

“Are they all yours?” asked Jorge, caressing them and taking up one in his arms.

“And that one besides, in the mother’s arms, and the girl in the city.”

“Oh, yes, Bertha; she must be quite a woman.”

“Yes, she is grown; but come, do take something; my wine is very pure and cannot possibly hurt you. That’s the juice of the grape and nothing else.”

“Thanks, thanks; but I take nothing at this

hour. I beg you to continue your occupation without minding me. It was for that I came."

"Oh! this is just about finishing. It is quite noon," added he, glancing up at the sun. "In a few moments all these people will be going to dinner — Where are you taking that cart, you stupid fellow? Excuse me, Snr. Jorge, but these blockheads — I will be back directly," and rushing off, he placed himself at the oxen's heads and guided the cart in the right direction. "You seemed bent upon destroying my lemon-trees."

"You should have some of my lemons this year, Snr. Jorge," he continued, returning with an enormous lemon which he exhibited with pride.

Luiza now came forward with a chair, which she offered, saying, "How you have grown! And how is your brother?" she continued, regarding him with curiosity and complacency. "I saw him a few days since crossing Giestal bridge."

"And your father, Snr. Jorge?" asked Thomé gravely.

While Jorge replied to these questions, Thomé continued to direct the laborers. Luiza, still holding the babe in her arms, did not quit the scene. Presently the bell of the village church sounded

three strokes — the call to noonday prayer. With the last stroke work ceased as if by magic. Every man removed his hat and offered up a short prayer. At the close of this regularly observed rite, the wife, saluting those around her with a "Good afternoon!" said, as she took the path to the house, "Come in to dinner."

All immediately obeyed the grateful summons, and soon quiet reigned where before noise and animation had place.

"It is your dinner hour, Thomé," said Jorge, rising to go.

"After these people finish, I begin," replied the farmer. "Luiza cannot attend to every one at the same time. Do stay. I do not offer you my dinner, because it was not made for you, but would you not like to take a stroll through the fields while they dine?"

"If it will not inconvenience you."

"Not at all. I ought to go and see about a well I opened down yonder," and opening a gate which led into another inclosure, Thomé motioned Jorge to pass on, while he followed him.

As they walked along, the farmer talked of many things. He told Jorge how he had treated some

of his peach-trees; how successful he considered the sulphuring of his vines; how much fruit his orange orchard had yielded; the price of his wine press, as well as his difficulties in opening his irrigation mill, which made his wheat harvest poor this year; what care his melon patches required — in fact, everything relating to the cultivation of his lands, where not a foot could you find in which noxious weeds had usurped the place of profitable growths.

Jorge listened with an interest so attentive as to cause Thomé great astonishment. He likewise questioned him upon many points of agricultural information. And the curiosity of the young noble was neither aimless nor idle, as such remarks are apt to be. His questions were asked with so great earnestness, there was such marked attention to the minutest details, accompanied too by such judicious reflections and rational doubts that Thomé well knew that the scion of the noble Negroens de Villar de Corvos was investigating with a desire to learn.

This served to stimulate him to greater enthusiasm, and he gladly continued his instructions. Jorge wished to know the necessary cost of main-

taining such a property in a state of cultivation, and what capital would be required to undertake a like enterprise. Thomé was quick at making estimates, and he gave the desired information with great readiness.

After a long silence, with a deep sigh the young man said hesitatingly, with averted face, affecting to examine the wheel of a hydraulic machine, "Why is it that our lands are so full of nettles and wild rape?"

Thomé da Pova turned suddenly. Fixing a searching gaze upon the young man—for the farmer had, at times, a way of looking that seemed to penetrate one's inmost thoughts—he asked, in a serious, almost sad tone, "Do you wish me to tell you truly, Snr. Jorge?"

"I do," was his simple reply.

"It is because the owner is Don Luiz Negroen de Vilar de Corvo, the 'Fidalgo of Casa Mourisca,' as we all call him here."

Jorge looked up inquiringly.

"It is for the same reason," continued Thomé, "that it rains in the halls of the majorat of Penedo, and that your cousins of the Cruseiro lost last year their seat at Mattoso. If I had leisure

to relate to you my life since I left your house at the age of twenty-two, up to this day, you would not ask me why your fields are full of thistles and nettles. I worked hard, Snr. Jorge. It is not only with water these lands are irrigated, to bring them up to the point at which you see them, it is with the sweat of a man's brow; the owner must be always on the alert, as a good father watches over the education of his children. There you have it. The blessings of a chaplain priest do not manure the earth," added Thomé, with a smile, to enforce the allusion, which did not escape Jorge.

"But how can you explain this, Thomé?" asked Jorge, with the docility of a pupil. "My ancestors never occupied themselves in agriculture; their lives were passed at court, or at foreign embassies, and they rarely visited their estates, except for hunting, and yet ours was one of the richest in the province, now" — He broke off suddenly.

"As to that — see here, Snr. Jorge; if they did not look after their possessions, nor feel the mischief of their neglect, it was because they had so much that they could afford to lose. It is your father who is feeling this to-day; to-morrow it



will be you young men. This is like a robust man who leads a life of dissipation. While young and strong he does not realize what he is losing in vigor, and thinks nothing can hurt him; by and by he reaches a certain point, and suddenly he finds himself exhausted; then he begins to consider the injury he has done himself and his children. Do you understand me?"

"I understand, Thomé, and believe you are right. Besides which, in those days," continued Jorge thoughtfully, "the privileged classes could give themselves up to a careless life of pleasure, well knowing that their very privileges protected them and would turn aside any evil consequences; they drowsed on in that persuasion, never perceiving that social conditions were changing, and now at the awakening" — He was speaking more to himself than to his companion now, and suddenly interrupting the sentence, he exclaimed in a despairing tone, as he pointed to Casa Mourisca, "And is it impossible to arrest the fall of that house?"

"Give it into the hands of a farmer — a working man who has capital to dispose of for a time — and you will see."

"His first act would be to level the old walls and the trees," observed Jorge, looking at his half-ruinous home and the ancient groves which surrounded it.

"Perhaps not," said Thomé, "though he possibly might; but it would not be necessary. I, who have an affection for those old trees and discolored walls, on account of the years I lived there — and not a very pleasant time certainly — but then, after all, I was but two-and-twenty — I would not dare to lay the axe; in fact, I would undertake to restore it to its former appearance."

Jorge could not conceal the ironical bitterness of tone he felt, as in answer to these words he turned to Casa Mourisca, and exclaimed, "Wait, then, home of my fathers, until misery drives us from under thy roof, and opens thy doors to some thriving boor who will repair thy walls, and turn thy barren fields to profit. God grant the man may have enough regard for the past to spare thee in the general reform."

Thomé well understood his words. With dignity, he said, "Why not say, wait, old house, until the Lord inspires one of its owners to look after it himself and take the cure into his own hands?"

“Remedies are high-priced at the druggist’s, Thomé; many a poor sufferer dies for want of the wherewithal to purchase his medicine.”

“Snr. Jorge,” said Thomé, with an almost solemn air, “resolve earnestly to be a man; leave off the life your family are living and have lived; determine with all your heart to be economical, industrious and vigilant; shake off this swarm of stewards and overseers; let the padre say mass ill or well, as may be—for that is between himself and his Maker; do all this and capital will not be wanting. The man who began to acquire it in that house will not grudge to employ as much as he can spare to prop it up and not allow it to fall; and should friends fail, credit will complete the work.”

“Is it charity you offer me, Thomé?” inquired Jorge, without, however, the least sign of anger.

“No, Snr. Jorge, it is not; you would not accept it, nor could I offer it in justice to my children. It is not charity, it is a loan; less risky than those contracted by the padre chaplain. There is no shame in a loan, taken up to rid one’s self of a heavier load of debt to evil-minded creditors, and to redeem and improve property. For a long time

now your house has had recourse to this, but so evil have been the sources, and so bad the use of the little so exorbitantly obtained, that instead of righting itself each time it has but sunk deeper. There is no harm in a loan, Snr. Jorge, when the contract is met in a loyal spirit. Why, do not governments, even, ask for loans?"

"But when, as in my case, there are no guarantees to offer, the loan looks very much like an alms, you must acknowledge."

"No guarantees? Who told you that? And your integrity? Do you know, I have a mind to relate my history to you, and you will see if I am right in what I have said," and leading Jorge into the shade of an arbor covering the water-wheel, on which they both seated themselves, he continued:

"When I left your father's house, seized by the frantic desire that we all have at times to work on our own account, I employed a small sum of money which I had saved in renting a little cottage and piece of ground, where working from early dawn until night-fall, I managed to keep myself from starving. You know that corner of the field near the dam, and the tiny thatched cottage close by?"

"Yes; I know it."

“Well, that was my first house. Luiza, whom I married about that time, worked quite as hard as I did, and so we went on, living, God only knows how, but always paying our rent punctually, and never owing a cent at shops. My landlord was a very rich man, and a kind-hearted one — God rest his soul! You must have heard of him — Doctor Menezes — a man of great learning, who had belonged to the supreme court of Oporto.”

“I have a dim recollection of having seen him.”

“Never was a better landlord; not exacting with his tenants, he was even ready always to assist them. One year came a drought which dried up all the crops. It was pitiable. Not a drop of water, the springs dry, the mill-streams as well; the mills stopped and farmers tearing their hair, and beseeching God for mercy. Such was the state of things that when the time came for payments very few had anything to pay with.”

“That is what happened with you, of course?”

“With me? I did not harvest anything that year, but I would not be backward with my rent. I went to a corner of my chest where were some new *cruzados*,\* which I had put by in case of ill-

\* A half-crown.

ness, but they were not enough, and as I was beating my brains about it all, Luiza, always my faithful helpmate, said, ‘Do not be troubled, husband; there, take my earrings’ — and she tossed them on to the *cruzados*. It was hard to take the girl’s trinkets, the only valuables she possessed; but there was no help for it. I pawned them, and with the sum thus obtained, I had the amount of the rent, and on the appointed day I presented myself at Dr. Menezes.”

“And what did he?”

“I can see him still, sitting in his study, with a rug wrapped round his legs, and looking at me over his spectacles. ‘Well, why here, Thomé?’

“‘Me, Doctor? I have come about—you know what.’

“‘O, yes! we are at Michaelmas. The year was rather a bad one.’

“‘It certainly was; but we must submit to the Lord’s will. The next one will be better,’ and I went on approaching the table; then taking out my purse, I counted the money and piled it up, he all the time silently watching me. When I had finished, he regarded me curiously, saying, ‘Well, is it all there?’

“ ‘Yes, sir ; did you not see it ?’

“ ‘And you wish to give me all this ?’

“ ‘It was now my turn to look astonished. ‘Why, is not this the price we agreed on ?’

“ ‘It is remarkable,’ said the doctor, nodding his head ; ‘you are the first tenant who has punctually paid me the rent this year, without begging for a deduction on account of the hard times. Where did you get that money, Thomé ? You are the poorest of my tenants, and I have seen the condition of your fields.’

“ ‘There was nothing for it but to tell him all ; but he would not let me finish. ‘Take that away, man,’ he cried ; ‘I am no vampire to suck my neighbor’s blood ; go and redeem your wife’s earrings.’

“ ‘Noble heart,’ exclaimed Jorge.

Thomé continued : “ ‘At all events,’ said the doctor to me, after a few moments, ‘you have unconsciously done yourself good service to-day. You are a good farmer ; that I have observed, by the way you have improved that little bit of land I let you ; but to advance yourself, even with the strongest desire to do so, you required capital, and to-day you’ve managed it.’ ”

“What did he mean by that?” interrupted Jorge.

“That’s just what I asked him. ‘Yes, you have provided it of a surety,’ he answered, ‘for you have established credit, which is worth an enormous capital. What you have done shows me of what you are capable. Come here to-morrow; I want to have a talk with you.’”

“And what did he want with you?” asked Jorge, growing more and more interested.

“On the following day I went, without the slightest notion of what he wanted to say to me. As soon as I entered he called out, ‘Ah! come here, Thomé; sit down beside me, for we have a contract to make. You are going to sign a lease of my property at Barrocas.’ Imagine how I felt on hearing these words! You know the quinta Barroca! Why, it is a county, one might say! I hire it! Good gracious!

“He, noticing my dismay, directly added, ‘Do not be alarmed; we will agree upon the rent, and you will go and take charge. The estate is in good condition; and I am certain you will not leave it worse at the end of the year.’

“‘But,’ said I, ‘your Worship knows that such



an estate as that needs many hands to work it properly; hands, and a certain outlay.'

"'But, man,' he replied, 'who expected less? Do you suppose that I am going to give it up to have you return it in the state that most of these farmers return the lands to their owners? Well, they deserve it, for driving such bargains that their tenants would starve themselves if they did not starve the land.'"

"Why, that man was a philosopher!" observed Jorge.

"'You go there, take good care of it; and the means necessary for implements, cattle, manure, laborers, etc., I will advance. You are industrious, the land is good; and I will wager that we shall both be gainers.'"

"And did you go, Thomé?"

"I did; and it was the beginning of my good-fortune. The land was blessed! and nothing was wanting to make it yield. I tell you, Snr. Jorge, money grew with the seed. Money buried that way in the earth produces money, Snr. I soon saw that the more you spend on land, the more it yields. It was there that I learnt to be a farmer. How much I owe to the counsels of that man!

‘Go ahead, Thomé,’ he would say to me ; ‘if you don’t wish the horse to come down with you on a long journey, give him plenty of good food ; the ration of oats you steal from his manger will cost you dear in the end.’

“Later on, when, by the help of God, I had paid off all my debts, I began little by little to collect something in the corner of my chest, it was he who said, ‘Thomé, don’t hide your money ; air it, so that it may not rust ; everything in this world needs ventilation.’

“And so I began, timidly at first, but gaining confidence as I went on, to invest my savings, and it was a pleasure to see how they increased. After some years they amounted to such a sum that I began to think of buying lands of my own, for that had always been my dream, and he it was still who dissuaded me.

“‘Do not be in a hurry to become proprietor,’ he would say ; ‘for after you have spent all your money in buying a piece of ground, you will not find the profit equal to the pleasure of calling yourself master of it. Do not drown yourself in a puddle. Would you purchase a horse and not have half a cent left to buy his food ? A fine

piece of business that would be! and I can tell you that land eats, as you well know.' In fact he convinced me, and I thought no more of the matter."

"But finally you did purchase?"

"When he told me to. This farm, which was not then what it is to-day, fell under the hammer. 'Try and purchase that,' the doctor said to me.

"Once more he assisted me. The property passed into my hands; then I worked harder than ever. I made every effort to pay my debt to him as fast as possible, for it seemed until that were done that I could not call all this mine. God helped me with bountiful years and good harvests, and as I still kept on the lease of Barrocas, and later undertook cattle-raising, I was able sooner than I had anticipated to accomplish my aim."

When Thomé da Povia reached this point of his narration, his countenance lighted up with enthusiasm, and with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes he continued with a sigh of relief: "What a day that was, Snr. Jorge! I cannot tell you how I felt! When I returned from the doctor's house with the receipt in my pocket, I was actually trembling, and my heart beat like a child's. Stealthily I

opened the garden gate and crept in like a thief, so that no one should see me. I assure you I was like one beside himself; I talked aloud; I remember perfectly what I said when I found myself in here: 'This is mine!' It seemed quite another thing now. 'Mine! mine!' I kept repeating. These trees, these springs, even these birds which were singing all about—for do they not build their nests in my trees? I know you will laugh when I tell you what I did. I embraced the trees; I struck the walls with the palms of my hands; I bathed my face and hands in the ponds; drank water from the springs; laid down in the shade—sang, capered, wept, and finally, shall I tell you? I could not help kneeling and kissing the ground. Yes, I kissed this mother earth that I had acquired with so much labor and fatigue, unstained by a single unworthy act. I felt a pride, and I feel it still, that all this came to me because I was upright and always kept my word. I can recall no other such joyful day in all my life except that on which I folded Luiza in my arms and called her my wife. It was almost the same thing; this was my second marriage; from that day I knew what it was to love the soil; from seedtime to harvest it

is one incessant care. To watch the growth of plants is like watching that of children ; each new shoot is like a new birth in the home. I measured the girth of the trees I planted ; I kept account of the fruits from the orchards. Those first years were one perpetual intoxication. And now you know my life. The Almighty helped me, and from that time all has gone well. And you see, Snr. Jorge, that he who owes his present fortune to his honesty and faithfulness, could not do less than offer his slender aid to a brave, honorable youth like yourself."

Jorge held out his hand to Thomé.

"You have done me good ; your life is an example — a lesson by which I shall endeavor to profit. I also feel the same desire to pay off every debt, so that I may rightfully call the property mine ; and when that day comes, I would also embrace these old trees, and, kneeling, kiss the earth bequeathed me by my ancestors ; but I fear this is a task beyond my powers."

"It is not. There is but one obstacle to overcome, and for this you must use every effort ; for it is a question of the welfare of your house, of your future and your honor ; your father must

allow you to administer the estate, and the chaplain priest must content himself with saying mass."

"Even if I could surmount this difficulty, which will be great, Thomé, because my father still regards me as a child, there remains yet another; my father never" —

"I know that," interrupted Thomé, "but Don Luiz does not investigate business details; his agent has attended to all that. Only prevail upon him to bestow upon you the confidence which is ill conferred on the padre, and I will answer for all the rest. The only guarantee I shall require for my money is a note of hand from you, Snr. Jorge; and moreover, as you are inexperienced in these matters, if you will permit me, I will advise you from time to time in these first years.

"As your father does not like your coming here, come unknown to him; the winter nights are long, and we can then meet and converse."

"I accept, Thomé," said Jorge at last, in a resolute tone. "I will speak to my father. The duty of saving my house from ruin will give me courage. I accept, because I have faith that I shall be able in the end to pay the debt I may contract."

"And I have faith," rejoined Thomé, "that

there will yet be happiness and rejoicing in that now sad home. Is it not true that the legend says there is hidden treasure there? Well, dig in the earth and you will find it!"

Luiza's voice in the distance was now heard, summoning her husband to dinner. Jorge left with a heart beating with hope and the excitement of feeling caused by the thought of a near interview with his father. The farmer dined with the appetite of one who has done a good deed, and is realizing a long cherished desire.

His wife found him more talkative than usual, and after dinner he went off to his threshing-floor singing, his generous heart full of happiness.

## CHAPTER IV.

### TWO OLD MIGUELITES.\*

IN one of the spacious saloons of Casa Mourisca, lighted by three large arched balcony windows and furnished with an air of richness, the remains of past splendor, the old fidalgo and his chaplain-major-domo, Frei Januario dos Anjos, sat awaiting dinner; or rather, it was the padre who awaited, being otherwise unoccupied. The pleasures of the palate but ill compensated for the annoyance of these long delays. It may have been these which prevented his gaining flesh in proportion to the food consumed, for the priest was thin.

Don Luiz was reading the absolutist newspapers, which were sent to him from Lisbon and Oporto. These supplied him with food wherewith to nourish his hatred against liberal institutions, through one

\*Don Miguel, who had usurped the throne of his niece, represented the clerical, despotie power as opposed to the Liberal party, represented by Don Pedro, who left Brazil to reseal his daughter on the throne.



of the choicest fruits of those very institutions — liberty of the press — a fruit which men of his party seem to nibble at with satisfaction, albeit to them a forbidden fruit. From time to time he interrupted the reading with a word of approval of some article, or of censure of some measure of the Government which, in his opinion, was never in the right.

Frei Januario seconded with all the strength of his benighted political creed, the reflections of His Excellency ; in fact, outdid him in the intensity of the anathemas which he hurled against those then in power. When his interest abated the padre would consult his watch, and sigh ; take a few turns about the room, maybe, and then vanish into the kitchen to watch the progress of affairs there.

The intervals between meals seemed like ages to the padre.

“Ha !” exclaimed Don Luiz, laying aside the paper in disgust, “they have granted a subsidy for a piece of the road of Valle Escuro !”

“They’ll have roads enough !” said the priest ; “the idea in the minds of these people for promoting the happiness and morality of the country seems to consist in plenty of roads and diligences,

Have they built one church? No, indeed! they know well how to rob the clergy, and doubtless are sorry not to be able to level every sanctuary which still remains; but our turn is coming; though now if they pause from destruction it is not for want of will to demolish."

It may have been this remark which suggested to the padre that he had a will to eat, for, suddenly changing his tone, he exclaimed:

"I should think Bernardino had forgotten dinner to-day; and I hear no signs of it in the kitchen; something must have happened; by your leave, I will go and see," and for the twentieth time Frei Januario departed for the kitchen.

Don Luiz resumed his paper and read on until his return.

"What did I tell you? He got talking with the gardener and lost all thought about dinner. And if I had not gone out — there's no reliance to be placed on servants; they're all a rabble. And Your Excellency will never believe that that gardener will yet be the ruin of this house. It was a great imprudence to take such a scoundrel into your household. He is a Freemason, body and soul. What do you suppose he was talking about? —

singing the old song, the disembarkation at the Mindello. When I got there I heard him saying, 'Seven thousand, five hundred brave men turned out of the city eighty thousand wolves that were harboring there,' and more of this sort of stuff; and the cook standing listening to him, and letting the milk and the soup burn — I smelt it as soon as I entered. It is really imperative that Your Excellency should take measures; if not" —

Don Luiz, feeling less interest than the chaplain in the fate of the dinner, and faithful to his custom of never speaking of the gardener, good or ill, went on reading without reply.

Presently he came upon the mention of a diligence crossing a bridge, which gave way, causing a number of deaths.

At this the padre's indignation burst forth afresh.

"What else can be expected, when those who rule us are so careless about the roads and bridges? What times we live in? Governments care nothing for the lives of the people. In what country of the world do you see such wretched roads as ours? These are the benefits of the Constitution. A fine state of things!" And Frei Januario continued now to abuse 'the Government at which, a

few moments before, he had been railing for expending too much time and money on these very things.

"This grows better and better, Snr. Padre," said Don Luiz at length, ironically summing up in these few words the result made upon his mind by his reading. And he laid aside the paper.

"Fine goings on, indeed," seconded his companion.

"And the worst is to come," added the fidalgo gloomily.

"A cheerful future, truly," echoed the other, taking a pinch of snuff.

"Ah well, those who live long enough will see in what all this will end; where this torrent is carrying us."

"They will not have to live long; before many days we shall have the Spaniards upon us. There is nothing else for us, as things go."

"Ah, poor Portugal!" groaned Don Luiz.

"Yes; she is rushing on under full sail. Since they have turned people's heads with this liberalism all is changed; now every one orders, every one talks, no one governs; this not being subject to authority—the fools do not consider that a

nation is like a house ; leave the servants to themselves, with no one to look after them, and you'll see what will happen ; you'll have to wait long for your dinner !” An irresistible argument with Padre Januario.

“The bitterest thought to me is that my sons will have to live in a society thus organized. Who knows what Fate has in store for these poor boys !” and the old noble sighed deeply.

“Your Excellency's sons should in no case have any intercourse with these men,” exclaimed the padre with vehemence. “They must not imitate your niece Dona Gabriella, who owes her title of baroness to them. A nobleman must always bear in mind his nobility.”

“The future is dark indeed for houses like ours, and God only knows if we have not partly prepared it for ourselves. We too have been to blame.”

“Unhappily, it is true ; but that is no reason why those born in this house should humble themselves before people who cannot say where they were born. Let Thomé da Herdade flourish as he may, he will always betray that he was a barefoot boy, who led your cattle to water.”

“Thomé da Herdade !” exclaimed Don Luiz.

"Such as he are sure to prosper in these times. To think of what he was, and what he is now!"

"And we shall see more yet. Do you know that he has sent his daughter to the city to be educated as if she were the child of somebody?"

"Bertha?"

"Yes; your goddaughter. What can the foolish fellow be thinking of, thus aping the ways of his betters? He never thinks of the false position in which the girl will find herself. Perhaps he has taken it into his head that she may marry a noble. Very likely! Your Excellency had better think of her for one of your sons!"

His patron smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"Now, I should like to know," the padre continued, "what a farmer's wife — for that's what she must come to — needs with all this education and accomplishment which her father is providing for her! Can you tell?"

"Every one nowadays aspires to rise," observed the fidalgo. "Universal levelling," he added ironically.

"And all this nonsense comes of the mess these miserable Liberals have made of society; everything turned upside down, and no getting at the

rights of things. The very shoemaker who comes to take our measure bears himself like a viscount. Things have reached a pretty pass in Lisbon, they say. There every one is Your Excellency to-day."

And thus they entertained each other; venting their spleen upon modern institutions in general, Frei Januario meanwhile never forgetting the longed-for dinner, but consulting his watch from time to time, until at last the bell sounded. Its summons vibrated in hollow tones through the spacious, deserted rooms and lofty halls of Casa Mourisca, where in former times a numerous and splendid court, now scattered by the winds of adversity, had obeyed its call.

Don Luiz entered the dining-room, preceded by the chaplain. The great empty hall, the long table with only four covers, told so forcibly of past magnificence and present decay, that there were few places about the mansion which awakened such melancholy reflections in his mind. His heart was never so oppressed as when seated at the head of his table, once filled with friendly faces, now so solitary and abandoned.

As the attendant proceeded to serve them, he

inquired, pointing to the empty chairs, "Did not the young gentlemen hear the bell?"

"The senhores have not yet come in."

"Not Jorge?" asked the father, as if less surprised at Mauricio's absence.

"Neither of them, Your Excellency."

"Snr. Don Mauricio," put in the padre, who feared the postponement of the meal, "went out hunting; who knows when he will return?" and he signed to the servant to serve his master.

"And Jorge?" persisted the latter.

"Snr. Jorge? I do not know about him; most likely he is somewhere about the place."

The fidalgo, evidently annoyed by the absence of his sons, which only served to make the desolation more apparent, resigned himself to their absence. The repast went on in silence. The dark mood of one participant, and the good appetite of the other, did not tend to promote conversation. The padre was absorbed in a generous slice of roast beef, with macaroni and bread in proportion, when Jorge entered.

He offered an excuse, but his father interrupted, bidding him be seated, and a few moments after arose and silently left the hall.



Frei Januario, however, seemed disposed to talk. Addressing himself to Jorge, he asked, "What do you bring from your walk, eh? The morning was fine; what did you see in the fields?"

"Much work — much rural life," answered Jorge.

"Yes; at harvest time every one is busy."

"But why is it, Snr. Frei Januario, that I see no activity in our fields as in all the others?"

This unexpected remark of the youth rather disconcerted the priest.

"I was amazed to-day," continued Jorge. "Whoever ascends Faia Hill, for example, and overlooks the valley, can tell at a glance what belongs to us; wherever one sees a neglected field, a ruinous moss-grown wall — the look of a cemetery over everything — he may be certain it is part of our estate."

"Not quite so bad as all that. It is true — but, my dear boy, what would you have? Since these men of Liberal ideas have ruled this country everything is changed. Whoever does not give in to their notions" —

"I cannot see what they have to do with it, Frei Januario," broke in Jorge. "Who prevents us from doing as others do — cultivating our fields and hiring men to work on our waste lands?"

“What! Only hear him! others! others! And who are the others? Poor fellows whom I once knew barefoot, and diggers of the ground!”

“So much the more praiseworthy — the energy which raised them from that humble position to the one they now occupy.”

“What a wonder, to be sure! Men who have no self-respect, and do not object to any kind of work, of course must grow rich. That’s a good one!”

“Then those who should respect themselves are condemned to poverty?”

“To poverty! to poverty! What a word! What ails you to-day? Have you caught the fever which is going about? You are too young to think about such things. Come, eat your dinner.”

Jorge flushed scarlet as he replied: “I am no child, let me tell you, Frei Januario; I am past twenty, and am resolved to be a man. I blush at the thought of my idleness when I see that ours are the only grounds that are put to shame by all the energy and activity of this community. I have yet years to live; years of honorable duty to fulfill; a name to keep untarnished, and I will know what future our administrators are preparing for us. I

mean to remove from my shoulders the burden of being the first of my ancient house who was unable to meet his liabilities; this is why I speak, and why I request you to answer."

"Oh! boy, boy, this is not your own idea. Here is some Liberal doctrine; I can scent it leagues away. So long as your father honors me with his confidence, am I to be catechised by a child who knows nothing of the world?"

"And when am I to learn? Am I to remain as ignorant and stupid as the rest of these morgados who are ruining themselves?"

"What is it you are driving at, Snr. Jorge? Don't you know that since these peasants have made themselves nobles, there is no competing with them? They have the money, and to them flock the laborers. All this is fine talk."

"They have the money, but how did they get it? Did you not just say they were poor men?"

"And you would begin as they began — digging the ground daily with spade and hoe, stealing from your mouth to lay up in the corner of your chest the wherewithal to buy oxen and so on. Capital!"

"We should not have to go so far back as that; no need of so many sacrifices. Sufficient for us to

attend to what we already have, and endeavor gradually to disentangle the net which now surrounds us and threatens to strangle us."

"Well, that's a good one! What am I doing and what have I been doing these last thirty-eight years in which I have enjoyed the confidence of Don Luiz? This matter is not quite so simple as you seem to imagine."

"But what are your plans, Padre Januario? What is your system of administration?"

"My plan! what plans should I have? System of administration! that's a parliamentary phrase. H'm! this is just as I said. Now, tell the truth, Snr. Jorge; these are Liberal ideas. With whom did you speak this morning? come, out with it."

"No matter where I got my ideas; their origin is of no consequence; the question is, whether they are good ones. It has nothing to do with Liberals or Absolutists. I see that my estate is going to ruin; walls fall and are never repaired; field after field utterly barren; everywhere signs of decadence; and I wish to know the extent of the danger which oppresses us."

"And should it be so serious, what would you do?"

"I would take pains to remedy it: make the needful sacrifices; give up this foolish shame and false pride which compel us to a life wholly out of keeping with the times. Let us undeceive ourselves; this is no longer the age of privileged and hereditary exemptions; it is that of work and enterprise. In these days idleness alone is plebeian, and the noble are those who render themselves useful in the world by honorable labor."

"Oh! oh! how he talks! I was right; there is a Liberal at the bottom of all this. That's as certain as that two and two make four. Oh! if his father should hear him."

"He will hear me, for I intend this very day to speak to him."

"What are you going to do, Snr. Jorge?"

"My duty. My brother and I will one day be the representatives of our family. In order that we may not be ashamed of the name we inherit, that name must be unstained."

"But who speaks of stain?"

"Frei Januario, I am no child, I repeat; I may have been so yesterday, but I am so no longer; perhaps this morning's sun has matured me; therefore I am not blind to the nature of the means

which serve still to keep up a show of past splendor in this house. Better would it be to eat off home-made crockery, sell the pack of hounds and the saddle horses still left, and buy oxen."

"But" —

"Presently, Frei Januario, we will talk further on this matter."

"But" —

Jorge, without heeding him, was about to leave the apartment when the padre in some alarm called to him.

"Come here! listen! Mercy on us, what a fellow he is! You are right in what you say. Things are not going quite as they should. To-day is not yesterday. Your family has seen better days; but whose fault is it; mine or your father's? Have we not been striving all these years to repair the evil? Our rulers are to blame, for they are aiming at the ruin of the nobility, that they may do as they list without restraint. Don't you understand? Those Liberals" —

"For Heaven's sake, Frei Januario, cease this perpetual harping on the Liberals. I have sense enough to see things as they are, and am not to be fooled by that old song. The Liberals, indeed! It

was they who lightened the enormous taxes which weighed so heavily on agriculture; it was they who enacted laws and institutions which facilitate the efforts of industry and punish extravagance and indolence. Now that the farmer is relieved of the onerous and iniquitous tithes, and all those odious exactions of the exchequer, thus rendering contracts and transmission of property easy, and opening sources of ten per cent. more profit to labor and intelligence than formerly — in such a period as this a house like ours is going to decay, instead of sharing in the general prosperity. It must be that it holds within itself some chronic cancer, eating into its very life, and this it is that I propose to remove while there is yet time.”

“I am astounded; if I am to believe my ears, you approve of all these innovations, and think your interests would flourish under them.”

“The laws are rational; and our affairs, if properly managed, cannot lose by them.”

“No, certainly not,” ironically urged the priest, with a cunning leer; “as you are the heir, no doubt you would like to see the extinction of primogeniture.”

“And why not?” answered Jorge quietly.

"The abolition of the entail I consider a great act of justice and morality, besides being a measure of far-sighted policy."

"Oh! oh! oh! what next shall I hear? You are utterly lost; you uphold this accursed law which will put an end to all the most illustrious families in the kingdom."

"Never you mind! the abolition of the entail only brought death to the large estates which ought to die. And, better still, it proclaimed the necessity of universal labor for all who desire to prosper. Family distinction should be solely the care of its members, not of the laws. If they lack the spirit and dignity to uphold it, it is right that it should perish, and that the name of its forefathers should cease to be dishonored by the vices and incapacity of their descendants. But a truce to these discussions, Snr. Padre; my part is taken; later on you shall know the result," and Jorge passed out of the hall, leaving the ex-monk overwhelmed by all that he had heard.



## CHAPTER V.

### A DECISIVE STEP.

THE heir of Casa Mourisca continued in his private room the meditations which had engrossed his entire morning. He opened books, looked through them attentively, then tossed them aside impatiently ; none seemed to answer satisfactorily, the silent questioning he put to them.

The library of Casa Mourisca was composed for the most part of works of general culture, with no definite tendency to any practical application. Jorge possessed a well-educated taste, and was by no means indifferent to art and all kindred subjects ; but now he was prompted by a firm and eager desire for information on the positive precepts of rural economy, and all the knowledge necessary for the realization of the great work he meditated.

Some arithmetical accounts, one or two pamphlets on agriculture, and a few stray leaves of foreign

journals were all he could find, and from these he gained but little satisfaction. His uncle's small library, to which in a great measure he owed his more advanced views, he had already exhausted, and moreover it did not abound in works of a simply didactic nature.

After turning over for some time the pages of these different books he closed his eyes as if to concentrate his thoughts in the effort to solve some of the problems to which these afforded no clue. His reasoning powers were sufficiently strong to serve him here, and from them he gleaned more fruit than from the elementary pages he had been consulting.

He was aroused from his cogitations almost at the twilight hour, by the entrance of Mauricio. Tossing his hat on the table with a vehemence of manner which betokened inward agitation, he silently crossed the room with hurried steps and seated himself, or rather let himself drop into a chair, passing his hand across his brow and pushing aside his hair in feverish excitement.

Jorge, perceiving by all these signs one of those frenzies in which his brother sometimes indulged, hastened to ask, "What is it, Mauricio? Is any-

thing the matter with you? What has happened out there?"

"Oh! let me alone," answered Mauricio, rising again and pacing the floor. "If you only knew how I am suffocating with rage!"

"Against whom?"

"Against this miserable rabble; insolent creatures who cast the mud in which they were born and have lived in our faces with the most intolerable boldness. But I'll crush them yet under the sole of my boot!"

"Splendid! Bravados of nobility! But these feudal manners are no longer in good taste, Mauricio. The time for them has passed."

"It is always time to chastise insolence. Nothing is needed for that but blood in one's veins and a sense of honor in one's heart."

"And blood in one's heart, too," corrected Jorge, smiling.

"You needn't laugh," continued Mauricio indignantly. "I tell you I am speaking seriously."

"Come, tell me all about it," said his brother. "Perhaps you exaggerate."

"No, I do not. After leaving you this morning I ran over the hills with but little success; the

dogs seemed to have lost the scent. I was returning home discouraged, when just by the Mill precipice four quails suddenly arose. I fired, but missed. They kept on in the direction of the water-mills, crossed the fields below and alighted in the pine grove of the Quemado mill-dam. You know the spot? I ascended the hill, and making a short cut by climbing the low wall which bounds the property of Luiz da Azinhaga, was quietly crossing the field when the savage boor, coming out of his barn where he was at work with his servants, yelled after me, 'Here, young gentleman, these are private grounds, and we don't wear French clothes here!' I looked round, but made no answer, and went on; he shouted again, coming towards me: 'I say, young man, didn't you hear me? I want no tramps in my fields.'

" 'What I injure I will pay for,' I said, beginning to feel annoyed.

" The clown burst into an insolent laugh, saying, 'With what? Inquire first at home if you have the wherewithal to pay your debts.'

" Hearing this I lost my head and ran at the fellow, exclaiming, 'That you may not doubt it, I'll pay off this to you, you base villain!' He was

unarmed, and drew back to seize a hoe; the men at the threshing floor ran at me with mallets and flails. I levelled my gun, and would have shot the first one who touched me, upon my honor! But just then I heard shouts behind me; it was Thomé da Pova, who happened to be passing, and ran up to separate us. He read us a lecture, and brought me here almost by force. A nice sort of people we are surrounded with! one cannot go abroad nowadays without danger of being insulted and assassinated. I should like to know who gave the scoundrels liberty to talk about our debts."

"He who contracted them and did not try to pay them off," returned Jorge sadly but quietly; and directly he added, "You say well, Mauricio; it was a disagreeable occurrence, and now you see I was right in what I said this morning."

"What did you say?"

"This cannot go on so; neither you nor I have courage to bear these humiliations, and they are inevitable."

"Inevitable! I swear to you" —

"Do not swear; it is not by violence that we can force them to silence; or if silent, you may rest assured that the looks that will follow us and

the thoughts our appearance will excite will be quite as mortifying. I have long suspected their sentiments from their manner, and it has set me thinking."

"And what do you intend to do?"

"To make myself respected, and prove myself their superior."

"Yes; but how?"

"By redeeming our property and stopping the tongues of insolent creditors by payment; thus placing ourselves as we prosper on a par with them all and even higher by our own inherent nobility."

"So you are going to turn farmer?"

"I am going to work, Mauricio. I have been reflecting deeply for some time past; our regeneration depends upon our ridding ourselves of the untenable prejudices in which we were brought up. Our ruin is the inevitable and just result of our absurd way of living and thinking; of our false pride and vicious habits. What, after all, is the meaning of this infatuated manner of speaking of our ancestors? What noble and magnanimous deed gave such distinction to our family that its glory cannot be quenched even by the life of inglorious idleness and waste which we are leading?

The chronicle is not clear in this matter. We have had warriors who have died for their country; that is indeed noble, but how many obscure soldiers among the ancestors of these people about us were quite as heroic as ours — only one never hears of them? We have had one or two bishops; I doubt not some poor priests may have humbly rendered greater service to religion than our mitred relatives; but no titles of nobility were bestowed upon them; they lacked a great-grandfather who having rendered some special service to a kind sovereign was by him ennobled to all eternity; such are the roots of many genealogical trees."

"You are cracked on this revolutionary democratic philosophy; it is leading you, Heaven knows where," replied Mauricio. "But what do you propose?"

"I am determined that I will no longer deserve these humiliations, which I cannot but acknowledge, are just," replied Jorge; "they have more reason to despise us than we them."

"Despise us!" repeated Mauricio indignantly.

"Even so; despise us. Just reflect, we are owing largely; much of our property is mortgaged; our name is no longer a safe guarantee in contracts,

and these repeated loans taken up by our agents are only obtainable at such prices as will leave us before long all but destitute. Every one knows this, and can you wonder if they feel little or no respect for us young men of twenty, robust, active and intelligent, strolling aimlessly about the country and looking superciliously upon men who may come down upon us to-morrow with the authority of the law, and, turning us out of house and home, take possession themselves? Do you think our mode of life very noble, Mauricio? Does not this blindness with which we are drifting down the current toward the abyss, provoke at least a smile of pity?"

"You exaggerate, Jorge; are things as bad as that?"

"You never can imagine how bad, but we may yet save ourselves if we will be men."

"And how?"

"By retrenching in our way of living, and by earnest application to our affairs."

"But" —

"Presently," interrupted Jorge, "I intend to seek an interview with father and speak frankly to him; beg him to allow me to look after the



estate, and tell him that in Frei Januario's hands it is hastening to certain ruin."

"But what do you know about these matters?"

"I will learn. Self-interest is a good teacher; these prosperous farmers around us had no other."

Mauricio became thoughtful; his brother's words seemed to have made a profound impression; there was a poetic side to all this which pleased him. He had none of Jorge's thoughtful, practical spirit; he was guided more by his imagination than his reason, and when anything took his fancy accepted it at once without due inquiry or reflection, and he would as hastily discard whatever did not, at first sight, attract him, although later on he would become enthusiastic over it. There was no stability in his character; the flame burnt too fiercely to last long. And so it was now, as turning to Jorge he exclaimed :

"You are right; we must be men. We have a noble mission to fulfill. Let us work; labor brings its own pleasures and rewards, and there must be a proud satisfaction in doing one's duty. Shouldn't you imagine, for example, that an author must feel happy in his hours of composition, an artisan with his tools, or a ploughman in his field, and

never feel the sweat upon his brow? Yes, let us be up and doing; and poetry will visit us in our hours of labor, and banish all regret for the past times of the fidalgo."

His brother listened with a smile of good-humored satire, silently making his own comments on these high-flown sentiments in favor of work by a shake of the head, and, waiting for the conclusion, with his usual kindness he rebuked his folly, exclaiming: "Gracious goodness, Mauricio! what are you talking about? Don't be dreaming, nor adopt an earnest resolution like this of ours under any such delusion. Look things in the face. Labor is noble, certainly; but as to the poetry in it, that's not perceptible to those who are undergoing the fatigue of it. If you enter upon the path we propose, with any such fancies, you will be disheartened by a cruel awakening; one must be guided by reason, not by a fleeting enthusiasm. Authors, mechanics and laborers know not these delights which you fancy; more frequently they are depressed and discouraged. Duty is a more stimulating motive than poetry; of course there is recompense independent of pecuniary profit. There must be; I do not deny it; a peace of mind,

a freedom from self-reproach, in the ability to look without shame at one's fellow men as who should say, 'I also have a right to live'; but the ideal you dream of is far removed from workshops and studios, or if it does enter, it is like the pagan divinities who hovered unseen over the heroes they protected. You may be under its influence, but you will not perceive it. If this chimera is what you hope for, you had better continue roving around the villages and shooting among the hills."

Mauricio smiled.

"You are incredulous, Jorge; because you see no poetry where every one else sees her — in these meadows and valleys and streams."

"I saw her this very day, in a farmer's house, where you, indeed, would not have recognized her," returned Jorge. "But Thomé did not perceive her, nor did any of his laborers. I did, because I was an outsider."

"And how should Thomé have the wit to see her?"

"He might, but that when one works with a will the vision conceals itself, lest it may cause distractions like those which beset a lover. Labor is exacting, severe."

The brothers continued their conversation for some time longer ; and having agreed each one according to the strength of resolution in his character to lead a different life, they proceeded to seek their father. The time was favorable, for Frei Januario was taking his afternoon nap, and the old fidalgo would be alone. It was already dusk ; the landscape was bathed in moonlight, while the dark outline of Casa Mourisca cut sharply against the clear blue sky. The rustling leaves of the old oaks, the fall of water in the fountains, came with a melancholy sound upon the ear, amid the dark, mysterious shadows of the garden.

Upon such nights Don Luiz was accustomed to sit for hours at the window, in meditative mood, his eyes fixed upon the distant view, and his thoughts — ah ! who can say what sad remembrances filled the mind of the old man ? What images could present themselves to that somber spirit, but visions of past splendor, feasts and triumphs of happier days, brightened by the presence of his dead daughter, the light of his life, whose removal left it dark and desolate ?

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FIRST ENTERING WEDGE.

NOT until he reached the door of his father's apartment, had Jorge felt the least hesitation. Don Luiz always treated his sons in so austere a manner, never confiding in them, nor holding much personal intercourse with them, that it required no little effort on Jorge's part to take a step so contrary to their usual habits ; but now they betook themselves to the gloomy chamber in which the old man sat, and where, for the first time in their lives, the sons sought an interview with their father. The singularity of the proceeding was of itself reason enough for misgivings on their part, even had it not been for the nature of the cause in hand, which could not be more serious.

But the resolution of the one brother was too firm, and the enthusiasm of the other too eager to allow them to yield to this instinctive timidity.

Their knock at the door was immediately answered by a command to enter. As they did so the moon lighted up the apartment, tracing on the floor the design of the arched window, but toward the door the shadows were so dark that Don Luiz could not distinguish their figures. It was a large room, and a few seconds elapsed before they reached the spot where the impatient nobleman awaited them, listening in surprise to such unwonted footsteps, and not in the least conjecturing whose they might be.

As the young men drew near enough to be recognized he asked in stern astonishment, "What do you want?"

It was Jorge who replied.

"If Your Excellency will be kind enough to listen, father, we would like to speak to you."

"Speak to me!" repeated Don Luiz; "this is strange; and what about, pray?"

"About our future."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the fidalgo, striving to conceal his rising irritation by irony; "I suppose the moonlight put this into your heads."

"I have long been thinking of it, father, and with great anxiety."

Don Luiz made a gesture of annoyance which

he as hastily repressed, and turned to question Mauricio in the same tone of affected irony. "Have the same misgivings in regard to the future attacked you?"

"Of late they have," firmly replied his younger son.

"Well, let us know the cause of all this inquietude," and he began nervously drumming with his fingers on the arms of his chair.

"Father," began Jorge, "Your Excellency must pardon the liberty I am taking, but my solicitude that the name and credit of our family should be preserved from tarnish" —

"And who has tarnished it?" roared his father, half-rising from his seat, and fixing upon his son a look whose fire was visible even in the moonlight.

"No one, up to the present; but I may tarnish it to-morrow if I cannot meet the indebtedness of our house, and I shall tarnish it when poverty knocks at my door and finds me indolent and ignorant of practical affairs."

"And how do you know that poverty will knock at your door?"

This time it was Mauricio who answered:

“There are those who have undertaken to teach us ; we have a teacher in every peasant, and even the children about us have learned to say that the fidalgos of Casa Mourisca cannot pay their debts.”

Don Luiz started at these words as if he had touched hot iron.

“In my day,” he said, “such lessons would have been dearly paid for ; the boys of my generation would have settled that.”

“So could we, sir ; but we should have the sore consciousness that not all our debt was cancelled ; pride and vengeance might be satisfied, but not reason and duty,” argued Jorge.

“Will you please to tell me what reason dictates, and — and — what else ? oh ! yes — duty.”

“It dictates that we should work to pay off our debts, strive to maintain the integrity of the estate which will one day be ours ; to improve it, if possible, and seek to inspire the respect of others.”

His father smiled, unable yet to believe that this resolve was serious in the sons whom he still regarded as children, and asked jocosely, “Very well ; what do you wish to be ?”

Jorge answered promptly : “Your Excellency’s steward in the administration of our affairs.”



The old man, impressed by the firmness and decision of this reply, looked steadfastly at his son, as the conviction forced itself upon him that Jorge was not speaking lightly, but with a fixed and determined purpose.

"And you," he continued, addressing Mauricio, "you would go to Brazil, I suppose."

Mauricio, not ready with his reply, having as yet formed no plans, hesitated, and his father perceiving this, went on:

"You have not thought about it. Well, let's hear your brother's opinion. So you think matters would prosper in your hands?"

"They can hardly be worse managed than at present. It would be no difficult task to surpass Frei Januario."

"He is a man of experience."

"This is a sad result of experience. You must know, father, the condition of our affairs, and can easily conjecture to what they are tending."

"And who tells you that this can be prevented?" inquired Don Luiz, now quite seriously; "these times are trying to families like ours; the rising tide brings mud to the surface."

"Let me try, father."

“Try what, child? You will be cheated and laughed at by these cunning rascals we have to deal with. What do you know of the management of property?”

“I will learn; what Frei Januario’s capacity can master, will not be beyond mine.”

“You do not realize what you are asking; think of the mortification of familiar intercourse with these boors, which all this would necessitate—mere clod-hoppers, who flaunt their wealth in our faces.”

“I would seek those of better breeding among them.”

“Breeding!” growled the fidalgo, with a shrug of the shoulders.

“The fact is, sir,” urged Jorge, with increasing vehemence, “this is a stern necessity. Think well; which is the greater shame, to deal with them in business or have them come and turn us out of house and home?”

“And then, father,” interrupted the younger, “think of the pain of seeing the room where our mother died, desecrated—this parlor, and even the apartments of our sister—our beloved Beatrice.”

The memory of his dead daughter always moved

the old man's heart, and bowing his head he murmured, "No, no! our decay will not go so far as that. I believe God has not this fearful punishment in store for us. I would die first."

"And we, sir; if we survive you, we shall be the sufferers; would you leave us such a legacy?"

The father covered his face with his hands and made no answer.

Mauricio was much moved as he witnessed this sincere manifestation of grief in his father, generally so reserved. With a strong impulse of sympathy he exclaimed: "No; our home shall not be invaded by aliens, either in your life nor after you are gone; only give us leave to work and we declare to you we will avert such a humiliation."

The aged noble raised his head and for the first time motioned to his children to sit beside him; then, turning to the eldest, he said, in a milder tone than he had yet used, "Jorge, the task you undertake is no easy one. I have not troubled myself much about business matters, but I know that they have difficulties. The padre is not a man of great ability, but he has experience and the desire to serve us; and if even so we have not prospered, how can you expect in your youthful

ignorance to make them flourish? Your plans must be vague — you speak more of the faults which have been committed hitherto, than of the efficacy of the measures you propose adopting.”

“Pardon me, father; they are not so vague as you think. I have long reflected on this subject, and in time, aided, when need be, by the padre’s advice, I am certain I can overcome the difficulties I shall meet. With your permission I will state my views in a few words;” and taking his father’s silence for acquiescence, he laid before him his projects of economy, the result of his readings, reflections and conversation with Thomé.

The clear exposition, the tone of conviction and the enthusiasm with which his son spoke was contagious; it so impressed Don Luiz that Jorge at last won his cause, persuading his father that he was destined by Providence to restore the fortunes of his house.

And yet there was an essential point in Jorge’s plans of which he had made no mention. He did not say how he proposed to obtain the capital required to put in practice all these projects. This was his secret; the mere hint of which would have banished forever any good effect produced upon

his father's mind. The initial capital would come from the loan offered by Thomé da Povoá, or by his credit.

This operation was indispensable, and the only safe one, for all the other capitalists had it in view to possess themselves of the fidalgo's estate, and therefore any loan from them would only be obtained on the most onerous and fatal conditions. But Don Luiz's pride would never have allowed him to accept a favor from Thomé, his former servant.

Therefore it was that Jorge kept that part to himself, and as his father happily never looked closely into such matters, he ended by giving his consent to his son's taking all the affairs of the estate in his own hands, only stipulating that he was to make no contracts derogatory to their illustrious name; and that he was not to despise the suggestions of Frei Januario.

"I promise you that you will have no cause for shame," replied Jorge, "and I certainly will not reject the padre's advice."

"I shall inform him of my decision," continued Don Luiz; "and now, what about Mauricio?"

Mauricio, questioned thus for the second time,

would have found the same difficulty in replying had not his brother come to the rescue.

"I have also thought about him. If he has entire confidence in me, there is no reason for his remaining longer in the province with nothing to occupy him."

"I have full confidence in you, Jorge, only do not make me your book-keeper."

"I was thinking of his going to Lisbon; he could serve himself and his family better there than here. It is true it would not be an economical measure. On the contrary, it would involve sacrifices, but they shall be made if necessary, for our Mauricio has the mettle in him to make them bear fruit."

His father made a doubtful gesture.

"Hum!" he objected; "what career can a son of mine follow in the capital in these days? Would you, perchance, have him a renegade to the cause our family have always espoused, and make terms with the men now in power?"

"I confess I have not given much thought to a suitable profession; but there he can make a better choice. He can, without dishonor, work for and serve the country, which is his all the same, which-

ever party is uppermost. However, the case is not so urgent, and Your Excellency might write to our cousin Gabriella, who, better than any other, could furnish you with the desired information!"

"Gabriella! the Baroness of Souto Real!" repeated the fidalgo, with sarcastic emphasis, "the last person! — a giddy-pated" —

"She has invariably shown herself friendly to us," suggested Jorge, "and even when Beatrice" —

"Yes, yes! she is good-hearted; but the society in which she moved during her married life — and even now in her widowhood — has imbued her with these current ideas. She even forgets that her father was a soldier who died fighting for the legitimate cause. She numbers among her friends those who made her an orphan."

"We should forgive this weakness in a woman; she has not the heart to bear malice, as you know, and I think, in spite of an appearance of frivolity, she has a foundation of good sense upon which we could depend for profitable counsel. Speak frankly to her; tell her under what conditions you would have Mauricio enter a society where he will find many partisans of the old cause living, without

apostasy, and I believe she will comprehend and render us assistance."

Even in this Don Luiz allowed himself to be convinced by the eloquence of his son, who was well aware that his cousin possessed influence in high political circles, and he trusted that her well-known diplomacy would remove the obstacles arising from the overweening pride and prejudices of the old fidalgo; and the better to attain this end, he determined to write her a confidential letter himself.

When father and sons separated Jorge's project was sanctioned in every point.



## CHAPTER VII.

### A NEW ADMINISTRATION.

FREI JANUARIO having finished his siesta betook himself to his patron's room in order to inform him of the dangerous and subversive spirit which had developed in his eldest son.

Don Luiz was still reflecting upon the changes which these economical projects would bring about, when the nasal voice of the priest overseer was heard at the door with the customary "*Licet!*" and without awaiting response, he entered.

"Still in the dark, Snr. Don Luiz?"

"We have not always so beautiful an illumination as this," said the fidalgo, pointing to the room flooded with moonlight; "it is like a night in May."

"Yes; but the mist is rising from the meadows. It will be more prudent to close the windows and light the lamps."

"I have no objection, Frei Januario, for we have something to talk over."

"Indeed! I also have something to communicate to Your Excellency."

"Well, let's come to the point."

The windows were closed, lights brought, and everything disposed for the conference, when the fidalgo signed to the padre to speak.

"I am sorry," began the ex-monk, "to have to impart startling information."

"Startling! what is the upshot of it all — some insolent creditor?"

"No, no! this is quite another matter; it relates to your son."

"Mauricio — what has he been doing? or is it Jorge?"

"Precisely." And he proceeded to give a detailed account of the discussion at the dinner table, interlarded with his own comments.

A few hours earlier this might have produced a stupendous effect; such as the narrator had calculated upon; but the interview with his sons deprived the revelation of importance, and Don Luiz merely raised his eyebrows, here and there, at some more than usually levelling doctrine of his son;

and when his agent concluded his story, instead of the indignation and alarm he had anticipated, he heard these simple words pronounced with the utmost composure, "And what do you think of this, Frei Januario?"

Mentally, the padre was using his favorite expression, "Bosh!" but aloud he replied with more formality:

"What should I think, but that there is Liberal poison here? 'Tis as clear as day; as soon as a man begins to sing hymns of praise to St. Labor, I say to my buttons, 'It is all over with you!' Snr. Jorge must have been conversing with a Freemason. Who knows but it may be with those engineers at Manco Inn; or I'll be bound 'tis the gardener's doings. He'll raise the mischief in this house yet! Anyway, they have filled his head with their lies, and will end, if you do not look to it, by making him one of themselves. I should like to wring their noses for them."

"I think your fears are groundless. Setting aside a few fanciful notions which his youth excuses, the boy's ideas are reasonable."

"Reasonable?"

"Why not? he wants occupation; he is tired of

this idle life, which is natural and praiseworthy ; and he only asks to do now what he may be obliged to do later on with worse results ; better he should begin now, with you to guide him, Frei Januario."

" True ; but " —

" He has just spoken to me about this. I find he has reflected maturely on the subject, and have granted him the permission he asks. If I had acted thus at his age " —

" Then it seems henceforth " —

" Henceforth, Jorge and I shall understand each other ; you need rest."

" I am not tired," muttered the priest.

" I hope you will explain everything to my son, and lend him the aid of your experience."

" Of course, of course ; but indeed " —

The hall clock striking nine, cut short the sentence, suggesting the approach of supper. " By your leave," said he, rising from his seat, " I must see to matters in the kitchen," and he passed out, grumbling to himself : " It is all plain ; the son is a Freemason, the father idiotic, and the house ruined."

As usual, suspecting the cook of inattention to his important duties, Frei Januario went on tip-

toe, in order to catch the delinquent in the act. An uproar of voices as he approached confirmed his suspicions. He peeped in; the servants were all assembled, and his implacable enemy, the gardener, was the orator. Of all the audience, none was more attentive than the cook, seated on a low bench, his legs crossed, his hands clasping one knee and entirely oblivious of supper. The priest listened in a fury, to these words :

“It was when the Emperor — what a man that was — made the speech about the Mindello, where we landed on the eighth of July, 1832, late in the afternoon. ‘Soldiers ! those are the shores of ill-fated Portugal ; there your fathers, mothers, wives and children are sighing for your coming, and confident ’ ” —

This was too much for Frei Januario. The proclamation of Don Pedro, of which he had heard often enough, thanks to the gardener, never ceased to move him to the highest indignation, and he burst into the kitchen, exclaiming, “Aren’t you ashamed of yourselves ? there’s the fidalgo waiting for his supper, and you lazy rascals gaping at the lying stories of that man ! ”

The startled servants dispersed and went about

their accustomed avocations ; the gardener retorted, as usual :

“Lying stories ! Take care what you say ; I heard and saw it all as plain as I hear and see you, and I’m proud to say it. Lying stories, indeed ! why, any one can read it in the public papers, and more besides. I was a soldier of the Emperor’s, and ” —

“Well, well, let’s have no more of this ; your place is in the garden, not in the kitchen.”

“Oh ! if we come to that, the chaplain’s place is not among the pots and pans, and yet no one can say that you stick so closely to any other post.”

“Take heed to your tongue ; some day my patience will be exhausted, and you will have only yourself to blame.”

“You needn’t threaten me ; I have been a soldier, and no friar is going to get the better of me, let me tell you ; I know the good-will they bear us ; I can see now the Franciscan convent on fire on the night of the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth, and how narrowly all my comrades of the Fifth Caçadores light infantry escaped being devoured by the flames. Eh ! what do you say to that ?”

“Hold your peace ! I shall inform Don Luiz of

these harangues in the kitchen, and your insolence in speaking of religion and the church."

"Who said anything about them? I was speaking of the friars — that's quite another thing."

The dispute ended by the sudden retreat of the priest, who was always worsted in these discussions. The other domestics laughed behind his back, and the gardener proceeded to give a detailed account of the burning of the convent.

The padre for the hundredth time besought his patron to dismiss the obnoxious servant, and the old gentleman for the hundredth time maintained the usual silence; and not until the appearance of supper was the chaplain's rage appeased.

The meal was a silent one; the padre was vexed, Don Luiz thoughtful, and the brothers exchanged knowing glances at the surly aspect of the former. On rising from the table the fidalgo said to his eldest son: "Frei Januario has been informed of our contemplated change; to-morrow he will have the kindness to make the necessary explanations," and with a brusque "good-night," he left them. The young men also rose to depart, Jorge merely asking at what hour the next day he should seek the chaplain for their conference.

“What hour? ah! yes; how do I know? There is no hurry; if not to-morrow” —

“It must be to-morrow,” interrupted Jorge.

“It must be, indeed! What do you know of my business? It must be! That’s a good joke!”

“Do not be troubled; I shall not detain you long. I only wish you to make over to me the account books and papers.”

“The account books and papers; what for?”

“Because from to-morrow I am to have the charge of them.”

“I don’t understand this child’s play. I never thought Don Luiz would treat me in this manner after so many years of service; he must be in his dotage to heed the whims of a child in matters of such serious nature; and if you must know, Snr. Jorge, I have neither time nor patience to be teaching children.”

“Who asked you to do it?”

“Why, what do you want with me to-morrow, then?”

“Merely to receive from you the books and other documents referring to the administration of the estate, and that you may furnish any explanation I may require. There is no question of a pupil.”



"Ah! I perceive it is to be that of a judge."

"No; who accuses you? It will be a short conference, sir; like the interchange of the password between sentries relieving guard."

"Are you seriously resolved to take this charge?"

"Very seriously."

"A fine state of things we shall see! But this is a matter of conscience; I do not know whether I ought."

"Quiet your scruples, Frei Januario; the responsibility of an agent ceases when his power of attorney is withdrawn. To-morrow I shall expect you to hand over all these affairs to me."

"What do I know of account books? This is no warehouse."

"Why, did you keep all your accounts in your head, Frei Januario?" asked Jorge, laughing.

"I kept them in my own way; but as to all this new-fangled nonsense, I know nothing of that."

"Very well; I will examine your entries to-morrow. Good-night, Snr. Padre!"

"A very good-night," added Mauricio mockingly.

"Oh! away with you!" muttered the indignant

priest, as the youths went off laughing to themselves at his fears and discomfiture whilst he, meanwhile, turned for consolation to his usual substantial supper, grumbling between whiles. "They're all mad! To think of these children! He talks like the Grand Mogul. As if I were going to set down in books all these rent and debt accounts; but no matter, I'll soon cure him of sticking his nose into my concerns. When he sees the mess the estate is in, he'll soon lose his eagerness to manage it. I'll give him such piles of papers that the little boy will go running to his papa and tell him he has had enough of accounts. Little he thinks of the snarl which is even beyond me to disentangle." And the padre laughed and ate his hearty meal, and then went to bed, where the sleep of a certain class of happy mortals descended gently and restoratively upon his eyelids.

The brothers, however, slept little. Jorge sat late into the night reading, calculating, and turning over plans of retrenchment, while Mauricio was thinking also of the future and of the revolution to take place in his life, but in a vague, indistinct way, without any settled plan. Varied and brilliant images passed before his imagination, dreamy

and confused as the mind of an inexperienced traveler watching the vanishing shores from the deck of a fast-going steamer.

On the following day the important conference took place. Frei Januario tried to play off the trick which he plumed himself upon having devised the previous evening. He laid on the table a great heap of receipts, contracts, title-deeds and documents of every description, without the least classification, hoping thereby to intimidate Jorge and check his aspiring ambition.

Spreading out this chaos before the eyes of his self-proposed successor, the padre, leaning his elbows on the table and resting his chin between his hands, fixed upon the young man a half-comic gaze, like a charlatan awaiting the effect of his trick, with a smile of malice and triumph.

But Jorge did not lose heart. With a rapid glance he went on separating the papers. In a short time some order was produced, and he then proceeded to examine them in detail.

The chaplain began to feel somewhat disturbed by the turn matters were taking, and insensibly the sarcastic expression with which he had been watching Jorge, disappeared.

But the worst was yet to come. Jorge accompanied his second examination with a series of questions strangely embarrassing to the ex-agent. He then recognized that Don Luiz's son was not the child he had persisted in thinking him, and that the memorable lesson he had been intending to give the forward pupil, might turn out greatly to the disadvantage of the teacher.

At first he endeavored to parry the volley of queries and remarks by evasions, treating the matter jocosely; but the youth's serious and manly tone soon obliged him to lay that aside.

"Snr. Frei Jannario, I did not come here to play, and assuredly the subject under discussion is not one for jesting. I am one of the future heirs of this property, and desire to know how it has been administered up to the present time."

The priest tried the weapon of offended dignity.

"You mean to say you distrust me and would institute a trial?"

"Do me the favor not to bring that up again. No one accuses you. I have already said I am only seeking enlightenment from the past to guide me in my onward path."

Frei Januario made up his mind that there was

to be no escape from the "sabbatina," \* but it went hard with him. The heir pointed out to him the errors of which he had been guilty, the imprudence of many of his negotiations, the negligence in others, the illegality of certain acts, the embarrassments into which he had drawn the estate, all of which the padre essayed to smooth over, rubbing his forehead, groaning, perspiring at every pore, and so entirely awed by Jorge's patience and composure, that he saw in alarm the edifice of his boasted experience blown to atoms ; and the poor man began to stand in actual terror of this determined youngster. In after days the remembrance of the whole scene affected him with a nervous dread at any remark addressed to him by Jorge, more especially in the presence of Don Luiz ; and it followed, therefore, that henceforth the chaplain instead of spying out Jorge's actions, was only too glad to leave him undisturbed.

And thus the fidalgo's eldest son became his own master. The chaplain's testimony that he was quite capable of managing all the affairs of the estate was sufficient to inspire the most utter confidence on his father's part, who blindly entrusted

\* The Saturday school examination.

everything to him, without a question, just as he had done with the padre.

Consequently, without exciting the least suspicion, Jorge could have his nocturnal interviews with Thomé and the benefit of his advice and guidance. He went over his lands, making wherever he could more advantageous terms of rent, and drew upon the offered capital and credit of the farmer.

Great was the amazement in the neighborhood at this change of administration. Those who had interested views upon the estate flattered themselves at first that they would sooner gain their ends from this inexperienced youth ; but they were soon undeceived, finding him ever cautious and quick-sighted, thanks to his own intelligence and the counsels of the far-seeing Thomé, who moved invisibly in all this, unsuspected by any one.

As we have before said, the interviews always took place at night. Jorge would sally forth when all the household were asleep excepting his brother who, though he retired late, knew nothing of these visits. Thomé awaited him at the Herdade, where he entered quietly, and frequently their conferences were prolonged far into the night.

Both were learning. The farmer would open to Jorge the treasures of his experience, and the latter who had by this time enriched his library with books and periodicals treating of agriculture, would tell Thomé of the progress and improvement made in that direction in foreign countries, to which he would listen eagerly. Of a venturesome turn of mind, and free from the blind and superstitious love of old customs and practices, Thomé would make notes of many of these innovations, in order to try them upon his own land. What famous projects these two planned together, inspired by the wonderful results obtained in countries where agriculture is more advanced, practiced as it is by intelligent and educated men.

Before long Jorge found himself universally respected in the village as a shrewd and able administrator. One thing had served to increase this feeling, although not so intended. It was an affair gotten up by Frei Januario, who, still cherishing resentment, thought to augment the lad's difficulties.

He one day convoked all the domestics and laborers, and with an offensive manner imparted to them the information that Don Luiz had dis-

missed him from the management of the household, and consequently he was no longer responsible for back or future wages; they must look to Snr. Jorge for that; for his part he washed his hands of it all.

At these words there arose a murmur of voices demanding the wages already due; for these they held the padre responsible, having but little confidence as yet in the new incumbent.

"I know nothing about that," exclaimed the priest. "I am only too happy to feel my shoulders relieved of the burden; let others carry it as they can."

The tumult continued, notwithstanding the gardener declared he was glad of the change. Snr. Jorge was a young man of spirit and judgment, and would keep his word, he believed, better than any man.

At this juncture Jorge himself appeared. The scene had been enacted in a hall adjoining his private office, where most of his time was now passed, and he had overheard all, while the priest had supposed that he was out. He saw the necessity of putting an end to the scandal at once, and with dignity, no matter at what sacrifice, and rising

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from his seat he threw wide open the door between the two rooms, confronting the malcontents who instantly became silent, and the padre gave himself up for lost.

The young man addressed the former calmly : "When Snr. Frei Januario told you to come to me for payment, why did you not come at once, instead of making all this uproar? Come in; I am ready to settle with you;" and at his gesture of command they began timidly to enter the office, each trying to screen himself behind the other. "Enter also, Frei Januario," he said, as the padre was endeavoring to steal away; and, greatly to his discomfiture, he was forced to obey.

Jorge seated himself, and began questioning them in turn about their wages, paying each his due amount, and satisfying all, with the exception of the gardener, who stood quietly regarding his young master with moist eyes, when the latter turned to him, saying, "I believe I should offend you if I paid you at the same time as these faithless ones; you are one who will wait with this guarantee;" and he frankly extended his hand to the man, who seizing it with both his own in a strong pressure, exclaimed with deep emotion,

“ Oh, Snr. Jorge, the best payment you can make me would be never to pay me ! ”

Moved by this scene, the other servants came forward and deposited their wages on the table, saying, “ We also will wait.”

Jorge returned their money.

“ This is not necessary ; take it,” adding, “ circumstances oblige us to make changes in our household ; we must reduce the number of indoor domestics, and increase the outside laborers. So you, Francisco, Laurenço, Pedro and Ramon can seek other places. Two will be sufficient for us. You out-door men can remain with us if you choose, and if you have any relatives who would like employment, let them come to me. And now you may go.”

The tone in which this was uttered forbade any further observations, and they all departed.

“ Frei Januario,” said Jorge, turning to the crest-fallen priest, “ you might have informed me of this debt in a more delicate manner ; however, I thank you for having given me the opportunity of paying it.”

The padre muttered something unintelligible and left the room with a greater dread than ever

of Jorge. "Where did the young rascal go to get so much money?" he thought; "it can only have come from the Freemasons."

The gardener alone remained. The good fellow was so excited with the flattering distinction he had received, that in order to show his appreciation he began to relate to his young master how the attack upon Mt. Antos had been effected.

The news of this scene soon spread abroad, much to Jorge's credit.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### BERTHA.

THE days went by with little of incident. No answer having been received to Don Luiz's letter from their cousin, the baroness, Mauricio continued to lead much the same life as before. Notwithstanding the ardor with which he had embraced his brother's projects, the truth must be confessed that he endured this long delay with the greatest equanimity, and, quite characteristically, continued to amuse himself.

As for Jorge, he entered heart and soul into his work, and soon began to realize reforms and improvements which promised well for the future. The funds furnished by the farmer had relieved the estate from much of its burdens, and enabled him to undertake work on a larger and more systematic scale on one of the best parts of the majorat. The plough, the hoe, the pruning and the

budding knife were at work, restoring and making nature revive again from her long apathy.

Frei Januario witnessed all this with fear and enmity, grumbling over the lavish expenditure into which the youth was launching.

“Fine fun it will be at the end,” said he, “coming in like a lion, and going out” — But he did not impart his reflections to the fidalgo. He stood in too great awe of Jorge.

Don Luiz, on one of the rides he was in the habit of taking, accompanied by his groom at the prescribed distance, had an opportunity of observing some of these improvements, and reflected with satisfaction that the work was done by the estate, nor did he seek to inform himself by what means his son had accomplished the transformation. His confidence in Jorge increased rapidly, and he gave himself up blindly to his guidance.

Jorge's labors, however, did not end here. As before stated, the family was engaged in an important lawsuit, which would decide the right to nearly half the estate. This complicated and long drawn-out litigation had at length assumed an aspect not at all favorable to the fidalgos of Casa Mourisca. The padre had already warned them

that it was as good as lost. But Jorge had found in the course of his examinations into the family archives, documents which seemed to him of great significance; these the chaplain with his accustomed negligence, had overlooked. He showed them to Thomé who, like a true Minho farmer, was somewhat of an expert in such matters. The result was to place them in the hands of a competent lawyer who would conduct the suit.

The young man had made an excellent beginning. And although what had been done was still very little in comparison with all that remained to be accomplished, yet the beginning was certainly encouraging.

About this time a letter was received from Bertha. Before bringing this young woman to your notice, however, a few words by way of introduction, may be deemed necessary.

Bertha was Thomé's eldest daughter. She was born before the days of her father's prosperity, and her parents had sought for her godparents which would ensure her future.

The lord of Casa Mourisca had condescended, at Thomé's earnest solicitation, to accompany the infant to the baptismal font, and Luiza obtained a

like favor from a lady in Oporto; a lady in whose service she had been when a young girl. But the wheel of fortune in its revolutions had brought about changes in the lot of all these people. Thomé rose, while Don Luiz descended; and a like fate attended the lady. Of a generous but timid nature, she could not oppose the extravagances of a spendthrift brother, consequently she had been obliged to sell all she possessed in Oporto, go to Lisbon and open a school for girls.

Her first pupil was Bertha. Being ambitious to give her the education of a lady and cultivating in her the good traits she had already acquired in her intercourse with the young people of Casa Mourisca, where she had always been affectionately received, her parents had availed themselves of the opportunity. They had felt besides, the generous wish to aid the unfortunate lady, who in her opulence had always befriended them. Not wishing to offer assistance they had begged her to take charge of their daughter's education, and in addition to the stipulated monthly charge of tuition, they were accustomed to send some useful present to the teacher. She understood, and was much touched by the kindly act.

This step gave rise to much talk in the village. Thomé was accused of being proud-spirited ; and it was even said that he no longer cared to have his children associate with their former acquaintances.

The lord of Casa Mourisca had not looked favorably upon this step. Thomé's aggrandizement was beginning to annoy him ; but notwithstanding, Bertha, the playful companion of the boys and of Beatrice, the pale, gentle girl who still lived in the memory of all who had loved her, went away to Lisbon. Her father had seen her but twice during her school attendance, believing it wiser to leave her to the entire guidance of her instructress. Thus the lady had acquired a deep hold upon the young girl's affections.

And so Bertha had grown up, the graces of her childhood gradually passing from those juvenile traits which delight us into the mysterious shadows of young womanhood, where beauty is brought into higher relief and every charm fully developed. She was no longer the child who had left her early home with no thought concealed, no sorrow unconfessed, by childish tears. She was now the maiden of eighteen, influenced by the awakening life of



the heart, subject to all its subtle impressions, governed by all its contradictory impulses and the undefinable aspirations of that magical period. City life, without giving her that morbid languor so often mistakenly confounded with elegance, had refined her feminine delicacy, developed her sensibilities and enlarged her intellectual powers. But what above all distinguished her was her clear good sense amid all the attractions and seductions surrounding her, without being carried away by them; appreciating their advantages without losing sight of her humble birth and of the probable future awaiting her. If she had youthful dreams — and who has them not? — she recognized them as such, and sought not to realize them in actual life. The remembrance of her humble origin while not depressing her, still kept her prudent, acting not as a dark shadow, but as a tinted glass which colored, without intercepting, the light of the future; and thus throughout all Bertha remained always a reasonable girl. Avoiding any show of pedantry, her letters to her parents contained nothing beyond their comprehension; no word which could remind them of their own inferior education. Her natural instinct of delicacy taught her this

just as an analogous quality enabled her father to appreciate it. He felt that his child would never blush for her parents, and, convinced of this, not once did he regret having bestowed so much care and expense upon her improvement.

Her letters were read not only by her parents, but by many of their friends. Thomé showed them to Jorge, who did not fail to appreciate their plain, unostentatious style, which seemed to reflect the candor and purity of a womanly character, betraying so just a mode of thought, such an absence of prejudice, or of weak sentimentality — the too common defect of feminine epistles — while still evidencing a gentle and generous nature, so akin to his own, that the young fidalgo's heart became gradually and all unconsciously deeply interested. It was a sentiment which caused him no uneasiness at first, nor while indulging it did he even seek to inquire into its character nor suspect its dangers.

One day Thomé had shown him her likeness, in which he recognized the Bertha of their childhood, though with the expression of a new and dawning life corresponding with her present development; and from that time the girl's image began to be present with him in all his pursuits.

For the first time he took alarm. This feeling that reason could not account for, he regarded as a weakness unworthy of him, and resolved to conquer it; and now commenced a strange conflict in his soul which outwardly never betrayed itself, but produced at length a certain irritation against the being whose image had thus come to perturb his mental quietude and unsettle his hitherto remarkable mental equanimity. It would even seem as though he disliked her because he liked her so well; he feared her, and sought in every way to banish the weakness which was taking possession of him. Such was the state of things when the letter referred to arrived at the Herdade.

This letter contained news which would affect the family life. The lady in whose house Bertha was receiving her education, had suddenly died, and she thus wrote to Thomé:

MY DEAR FATHER:

I write you from a heart full of grief. My godmother died this morning; only last night she was talking and laughing in our midst and we had even planned for to-day an excursion to Cintra! At dawn I was called in haste to her bedside, as she felt ill, but I arrived only in time to see her expire; with difficulty she embraced and took leave of me. Imagine my feelings; we are all stunned; it seems like a dream. Poor, unfortunate lady! to be removed just as she

was beginning to live again more happily. I beg you to tell me what to do. You once spoke of my going to another school, if I ever lost my godmother, but let me remind you of some things before you decide. I will not say that my education is complete, but as I do not intend or desire to live in drawing-rooms here I can well dispense with the finishing off necessary for that. You have done much for me, and I ought now to think of my brothers and sisters, some of whom are at an age when I might render them useful service. Send for me. Mother must have much to look after and it is time that I should assist her. At eighteen it is a shame that I do not lighten her cares; it will be a part of my education which I can carry on there, and I confess that now she is gone — my godmother — it will be hard for me to remain in Lisbon. Let me go home and satisfy the longing I have to see you all. Love to mother, and many kisses to the children.

Your daughter, who hopes soon to embrace you,

BERTHA.

P. S. Please remember me to Joana, Manuel da Costa, to Mother Eusebia and all my friends.

Thomé read the letter to his wife, after which each sought counsel of the other. The desire to see and embrace their beloved eldest child so long separated from them, and the oft-dreamed-of happiness of having the home enlivened by the warm life which a girl of her age diffuses around her, decided the question as Bertha had suggested.

And so the necessary arrangements were made at the Herdade for the return of a daughter whose habits had been refined by her city training. The

mother's instinct divined better than might be supposed, all the requisite trifles, gladly provided by the father's liberality, and the joy of the happy couple reflected itself in the domestics.

It was in the midst of these preparations that Jorge found them on one of his evening visits, and soon learned the cause. Don Luiz's eldest son received this information with a start. It seemed to foreshadow the approach of a danger he could hardly define; but concealing his feelings he congratulated them on the anticipated arrival of their daughter, and even aided them by his ingenuity in the arrangements of her room. He left the Herdade in a strange frame of mind, in which pleasure and annoyance were oddly blended.

As it was necessary that the farmer should go himself to Lisbon, the economical conferences at the Herdade were for the time interrupted; but his absence was only for a week, at the end of which he returned with Bertha.

On one of his afternoon rides, as Mauricio was descending a pine-covered slope, he caught sight through the trees of two equestrians on the high road. His attention naturally aroused, he pulled in his horse until they should come nearer, and

soon he could distinguish a man and a woman, in the former of whom he recognized Thomé, while the latter appeared young and stylish. He immediately followed them, and on a nearer view thought that he recognized the features of Thomé's companion. But before he could fix the vague idea in his mind the farmer, waving his hand, called out, "Come here, Snr. Mauricio, and congratulate me; I am bringing back a dove to the dove-cote, whom I allowed to leave it long ago."

The lady rider was then Bertha, as he had suspected; the little village girl with whom he had played in the courts and gardens of Mourisca House; his father's goddaughter and Beatrice's companion, who had already been the object of some of his childish gallantries, changed from the pretty child into the brilliant and graceful beauty of youthful womanhood. With dark eyes, and a pretty mouth where a smile of gaiety and goodness always hovered, with manners and gestures where the artlessness of childhood was restrained by the delicate instincts of girlhood, naïve and enthusiastic, Bertha had at the same time a natural dignity which kept all familiarity at a distance. Mauricio looked at her in astonishment, as he ex-

claimed, "Bertha!" who blushed as she returned his salutation. "It surely is Bertha; that is the old smile, but what a change in everything else!"

The young girl turned from his persistent gaze, and with difficulty controlling her confusion, said, "I have grown older, have I not?"

"You have become an angel!" replied Mauricio.

"No, no," interrupted Thomé, "she was an angel before; but to-day if she were to die the bells would not ring out a merry peal."

"Earth would have reason to mourn," said Mauricio gallantly.

"You also are changed, Snr. Mauricio," replied Bertha; "when I left you did not say such things," and the same inward perturbation still rendered her voice unsteady.

"Because then I did not feel them."

Bertha shook her head doubtfully. "I think that those who say such things the best are those who feel them least."

"Have they taught you to be distrustful, Bertha?"

"It is an easy lesson; one learns it alone."

"Come," interrupted Thomé, "we cannot be stopping here on the road; remember, Bertha,

your mother is watching for you; let us be going on."

Mauricio turned his horse by Bertha's side and she rode on between him and her father.

"What dear memories these places awaken in me!" said she, looking around; "how well I recollect everything."

"Do you remember those ash-trees by the Palheiros Queimados?" asked Mauricio, pointing to the spot in the distance.

"Yes; it is where the Moira spring is."

"And where we went one day with Anna do Védor to gather water-cresses; do you remember that?"

"Yes; and a large dog rushing out from the Emigrado garden, and coming at me so furiously."

"And you remember who rescued you?"

"Yes; it was you, Snr. Mauricio; but Anna asserted that but for her much worse might have happened."

"Even so the fiendish creature bit me on my wrist; you may see the scar still." And Mauricio showed his wrist to his companion who leaned over to examine the vestige of their youthful episode.

"So it is," she said, beginning to feel more at



her ease. "And how is the good Aunty Anna do Védor? How fond she was of you and Snr. Jorge. I know she is living, but is she the same merry, active, frank creature?"

"Who, Aunty Anna?" asked Thomé. "You will find her looking even younger. What a manager she is, to be sure! It is a pleasure to see her in her fields with her sleeves tucked up, a straw hat on her head and a hoe or flail in her hand. She is worth any two men for work. Just see her on a threshing floor!" and Thomé gave a whistle expressive of the high estimation in which he held Anna Védor's work.

"Her son is a Justice of the Peace," added Mauricio, in hearty sympathy with this good opinion; "she is a good, generous soul, and as fond of us as if we were her children."

"I should think so," chimed in Thomé; "when she speaks of you young gentlemen, whom she nursed, her eyes glisten."

"But she scolds me hard, sometimes."

"Well, she knows why; and don't you think you deserve even more?"

"I won't say nay; but I complain of the partiality she shows to Jorge."

"And how is Snr. Jorge?" asked Bertha.

"Very well. Do you know he has become a clerk? He attacked the books and accounts of the house like a man, and now no one can get a word from him except on business."

"He is a man indeed," said Thomé earnestly.

"Yes; but he might take a little amusement; yet God gave him that nature — cold as ice."

"I don't know whether he is cold or warm, but I do know that he is a young man of judgment, and if he goes on as he has begun he will remedy many a piece of folly, ancient and modern, in your family."

"The modern refers to me, I'll wager. You are wrong; I have also made up my mind to work. It is not my fault that you see me here to-day."

"Are you going away?" asked Bertha.

"What remedy, Bertha? I yield to a hard necessity. My heart will remain here, believe me, amid these valleys and streams; but what can I do?"

"And where are you going?"

"How do I know? Where Fate leads me; but your father is laughing."

"I was laughing at these lamentations. Any

one to hear you would suppose you were really going and that the leaving would be immensely hard."

"And why not?"

"I find it difficult to believe that you really will go, Snr. Mauricio; but if it should be so, you will not weep much over the packing of your trunk."

"You do me injustice, that is plain."

"No, sir, I do not; but I know what it is to be twenty years old, and I know something of your head. And now, this is our road; if Snr. Mauricio wishes to bear us company, he knows there is a house at the end, at his disposal — if not" —

"Thank you, Thomé, another day. I will not disturb by my presence the family meeting. Good-by, Bertha; we shall continue to be the same friends as formerly, shall we not?"

"And why not, Snr. Mauricio?" and with an artless smile she extended her small and delicate hand to meet his. Blushing, as with a gallantry foreign to these times, he raised it in knightly fashion to his lips, then bowing with finished elegance, started off at a galop.

As she gazed thoughtfully after him till he disappeared from sight, her father, who had been

watching all this by-play, took occasion to warn his daughter.

“Have a care, Bertha! Don’t lose your heart there. I know nothing of city ways, but I do know what goes on here, and I advise you not to trust much in Mauricio’s friendship. I do not say he is a bad fellow; he has many good qualities — bright, active, generous; but he is volatile. Moreover, they are noble, and you are the child of a peasant who once served in their house. Do not make me repent having educated you above your station. I have had my doubts if it was right. How will you accustom yourself to our ways?”

Somewhat moved by her father’s words, Bertha smiled as she replied: “I will bear in mind your advice; but do not be troubled about me. I have never allowed myself to be misled by the advantages you have so kindly afforded me; but in a friendship with Mauricio, there is no danger for me; for they were all my companions in childhood, and while I feel a liking for them, I know well the separation between us.”

“Jorge is very different,” said Thomé. “He is serious and steady; if he says he is your friend he means it; but he” —

“He was just the same as a child; always grave.”

“And much more so now. He is interested in business matters only; has taken the management of the estate into his own hands, and will give a good account of it, I believe. He comes to our house every night to consult me; only at night, to escape the old man’s knowledge, whose antipathy to me is incurable. I care not, however, but shall do him all the good I can.”

In a few moments they reached the home, where the daughter was received with smiles and happy tears by her mother, while her little brothers and sisters gazed shyly at their lady-like sister, and the servants respectfully greeted her with bashful, unintelligible words. Hours passed before the happy household settled down to their usual avocations. Bertha wandered about, giving and receiving joy, and renewing her old associations. It was indeed a welcome return of the long absent one.

## CHAPTER IX.

### QUESTIONINGS.

GREAT as is the joy of a return to home, the moments are brief in which this is felt in its intensity. We fancy at a distance that it will be a never-ending happiness ; but after the first exuberant expansion, that illusion vanishes, and is succeeded by a void in the heart, a vague longing after we know not what, awaiting a new dawn, we know not where.

When at night Bertha retired to her own room, the thirst for affection and the longing which she experienced on her arrival had been fully satisfied. The excitement had exhausted itself, and her accustomed composure having followed, she began to recognize one after another the old familiar objects around her. In the calm solitude of night, a profound melancholy took possession of her mind. The young girl realized that not all the

attentions and efforts of her parents would suffice to entirely transform that room into one of those perfumed and refined apartments in which a delicate woman breathes a congenial atmosphere. The quiet of the hour, the silence of the country broken only by those mysterious voices of the night always audible, conspired to increase her melancholy. Such moments come to all: our hearts fail us, and the future grows dark with clouds which seem to press upon us almost to suffocation. Do not blame Bertha for this inexplicable sadness, nor doubt that hers was withal a lovable and womanly nature. All souls are not gifted alike with that convenient flexibility which readily adapts itself to every change. The hearts which strike deepest roots are those which suffer most by transplanting. It was no vain and foolish regret that her home was so humble; it was rather one of those instincts apart from reason, for which no one is accountable. To escape from these oppressive thoughts she stepped to the window and looked out into the solemn night, whose peace gradually passed into her mind with a magnetic power which dissipated her gloomy reveries, substituting therefor more welcome images.

Her past was a simple history of innocent affections ; there was no intense light of love ; only the faint auroral gleam which heralds that mysterious thrill of the soul, awakening new powers within it. She thought of her early friend Beatrice, the delicate child who seemed to have lived only long enough to leave a lasting regret in the hearts of all who knew and loved her. Rapidly the scenes of their happy childhood presented themselves to Bertha's mind : their sports, their festivals, and even the tears they had shed together. What times those were ! And by the side of the pale image of the sister arose the faces of the brothers. She recalled Jorge's infantile countenance which even then betokened the gravity of after years, the mature air he assumed when rebuking his more turbulent companions, in whom he ever inspired respect and deference to his opinions, while contrasting with him came the remembrance of the restless, volatile Mauricio, violent in temper, yet affectionate as choleric, in whose childish heart the passions of the man were already beginning to stir. Perhaps his was the more vivid image of the two, for Mauricio had been her favorite. Her own nature responded sympathetically to his impulsive



frankness, while the seriousness of his brother intimidated her at times; an effect which was increased by the difference in their ages.

Still pondering the past Bertha raised her eyes to Casa Mourisca, looming through the darkness like some great monster guarding the enchanted gardens. All at once the monster opened one of its eyes — a light appeared in one of the towers: the only one in all the castle. It riveted her gaze. Every now and then it would vanish, then reappear as if some one were pacing back and forth in the room, then become stationary or be entirely eclipsed for long intervals to shine out anon more brilliantly still. It was clear that one of the inmates there was awake.

“Can it be Don Luiz?” she asked herself. “Poor lonely old man! Perhaps he is thinking of his lost daughter; or — who knows? — it may not be the fidalgo, but one of his sons — Mauricio probably. Yes, that must be their room,” the image of her companion of the afternoon again appearing to her mind. She recalled the words they had exchanged, his manner, her father’s comments — had he with a true instinct divined the danger in the young noble’s presence for his daughter’s

heart? What more natural for a heart thus prepared that the image of a youth like Mauricio should find readiest entrance, especially with all that halo of the past about him?

Prolonged and varied were the musings of Bertha as her eyes dwelt upon that light in Casa Mourisca; and when at a late hour it disappeared, she awakened from a dream in which she had wandered far, as the candle in her room witnessed. She hastily aroused herself and, passing her hand over her brow, sought to compose herself to sleep.

"I must be sensible," she murmured, while loosening her braids, "and scatter this mist from my mind, that the sun of reality may shine through. It is not for me to indulge idle fancies, but accept the life before me in my native sphere. All the rest is past!"

And with this wise resolve she fell asleep.

If the light in Casa Mourisca was not without an observer in whom it excited many thoughts, neither was Bertha's own light lost in space. Its rays fell upon observant eyes. Jorge in his room was, as usual, poring over his books late into the night, now and again rising to pace the apartment in reflective mood. On this occasion, however,

Mauricio also had been keeping late vigils, but of a different kind — venturesome excursions in neighboring hills and valleys, visits to different houses where a whist table might be found, or a fireside enlivened by ladies' smiles. On his return at a late hour he found his brother busy with his studies, and as he entered the room Jorge acknowledged his presence with a nod of the head, but continued reading.

“Good evening, necromancer,” was Mauricio's greeting. “At this hour, in this turret, with the pale light of a lamp and an open book, you represent the astrologer admirably.”

Jorge smiled as he turned the leaves; his brother stepped to the window. “But you should consult the stars also; they are brilliant to-night, and behold! a rare sight in our firmament. We are not the only ones who keep late hours.”

“What do you mean?” asked Jorge, as he closed his book and joined his brother.

“That I have discovered a new planet; another light in the village; 'tis in Thomé's house.”

“Thomé up at this hour,” said Jorge musingly, as he gazed at the light.

“Not he; Thomé has been asleep for hours.

He would never be guilty of such extravagance. That light betrays city habits; it is the daughter who is keeping watch there."

"Oh! Bertha; I forgot she had returned," replied Jorge, in a constrained tone.

"Returned," said the other, "and entirely different from the girl who went away."

"In what way?" asked Jorge, looking up.

"She left here a pleasing child, and returns a captivating woman!"

"Ah," replied Jorge, with a forced smile, "so you have already been taking observations."

"I'll tell you what; I could hardly believe when I saw her that she could be Thomé's daughter; such an air of refinement, such distinguished manners."

"O, yes! the next thing you will be falling in love with her."

"Well, I assure you, it would not be in bad taste; she is infinitely superior to any of our cousins about here; so much for education."

Jorge shrugged his shoulders, and in an irritated tone replied: "I doubt if I should see her with your eyes; to me she will be only the little Bertha of the past."

“O, yes! you’re a philosopher; but for me, fond as I am of children, I own a preference for those of a larger growth.”

“A school miss,” acrimoniously rejoined his companion, “with a smattering of learning, dropping like the pearls of our nursery tale from her pursed-up lips; this is your enchantress; but I confess that midnight lamp has no charms for me; it suggests a young ladyish romance which is insufferable;” and he turned away with an ill humor difficult to account for.

“As to that, if an open window at night is an index of such a crime, then you, the last man in the world, might be accused of it. You are mistaken; Bertha is really adorable, as you will see. Women adopt habits of elegance much more readily than men. No one conversing with Bertha would ever suspect her origin. It seemed to me impossible that the gentle girl who rode so stylishly by my side to-day, could be a mere villager.”

The elder brother paced the room in evident agitation. “Mauricio, Mauricio, take care; guard yourself against a flirtation in this quarter, which may have more serious consequences than those you carry on with our cousins here. Of these, the

worst result would be a marriage, by which you would graft on to the illustrious trunk of our family tree some branch from an equally ancient root."

"There you are at it again — mocking at our aristocratic descent. I do not know you, Jorge. Where have you caught this democratic fever which has been upon you of late? Has the revolutionary fly stung you, too?"

"You do not know how it came to me? From a little reflection; that is quite sufficient to make me laugh at our family's grand airs and pretensions; overwhelmed with debt, yet imagining there is something noble in them which can avert the inevitable consequences of their carelessness and idleness. They will doubtless be much astonished when some day they come to receive an alms from the wife of one of their tenants, if she does not gratefully thank them for accepting her charity."

One less preoccupied than Mauricio would have suspected that the vehemence with which his brother inveighed against the aristocracy was somewhat feigned; as if he sought to conceal his agitation and its motive.

"I am not in the mood to discuss the subject of high-born pretensions. Let that pass. You warn

me not to fall in love with Bertha. I recognize the prudence of that advice, because she is certainly far superior to any one about here, and if I were not so soon to leave these parts in search of a career I could not promise to remain indifferent to her charms ; and besides, we have reminiscences of childhood which I am sure she has not forgotten."

Jorge continued his walk to and fro in silence.

"But," continued his brother, "there's that light still. Do not you see some one at the window? What can the girl be doing at this time of night!"

"It is difficult to distinguish between the leaves of the chestnut-tree," replied Jorge ; "but I think there is some one there. Perhaps she is thinking of some Romeo student she has left sighing in Lisbon."

"You are perfectly unbearable," exclaimed Mauricio.

"Now, then, for an experiment," said Jorge, after a short silence returning to the window where the other still lingered. "Let us extinguish our light and see if she, too, finding herself the only watcher, does not put out hers and retire."

Mauricio consented. As the reader is aware,

Bertha, from a different motive than that attributed to her, did very soon withdraw her light.

"There! did I not say so?" said Jorge, laughing triumphantly, yet not altogether pleased.

"Well," rejoined his brother, "so much the better."

"How so?"

"Because I see in this a proof of sympathy."

"Oh! you are still thinking of that, are you?"

"And why not, Jorge? A woman with no feminine weaknesses is not a perfect woman. If I were to meet an angel on this earth of ours — pure, earnest, sinless — I might pray to and worship her, but I should never fall in love with her."

"Good-night," said Jorge abruptly. "It is two o'clock. Don't dream of Bertha!"

"Don't you dream of accounts; that would be a worse nightmare." And the brothers parted in laughing good-humor.

For some time the image of Bertha was present with both. Jorge strove to banish the pleasing memory he retained of her, and Mauricio fell asleep firm in the conviction that Bertha's vigils had been consecrated to him.



## CHAPTER X.

### THE TASK GROWS HARDER.

BERTHA awoke, resolved to accept with a woman's courage, her new conditions of life, and to enter heart and soul into the fulfillment of her domestic duties ; to this end she strove to curb the wayward fancies of girlhood.

Mauricio, on the contrary, indulged in pleasant thoughts of Bertha, resolving to see and speak with her that day.

Jorge arose early, tired from the unquiet sleep of the night, and sought to divert his mind by studying out an agricultural problem upon which he had meditated for some days past.

The bright, sunny morning dissipated the mental clouds which had oppressed Bertha's spirits ; under its cheering influence her fate looked more attractive, and she reproached herself for the vague misgivings to which she had yielded. In aiding her mother in her household occupations she found a

helpful diversion, and experienced a real pleasure. The caresses of her brothers touched her, and it was with genuine light-heartedness that, taking one of them in her arms and another by the hand, she crossed the ploughed field and seated herself by a clear spring half-hidden by a hedge of roses and vines which separated that part of the grounds from the road. And what delight she felt in the freshness of the dew on the clover and wild grasses, and in brushing the drops from the trees and bushes as she passed. Her little brothers ran to gather her roses and other wild flowers, which she made up into bouquets for them.

Absorbed in this pastime she began in the joy of her heart to sing or rather hum a popular song. The rustling of the branches from time to time caused her no discomfiture, for she believed it to be some bird with its young. All at once the boys came running towards her with a fresh supply of flowers, when suddenly they paused, fixing their eyes upon a part of the hedge which separated them from the highway. Bertha, turning in the same direction, discovered Mauricio, who was observing her through a gap in the foliage.

Thomé da Pova's daughter rose with a start,

and was unable to conceal entirely her confusion at this unexpected meeting. Controlling herself as best she could, she said, smiling,

“Have you been there long?”

“Some minutes, I should think.”

“Doing what?”

“Seeing and hearing you.”

“You are easily amused.”

“This is a novel sight for me.”

“What, a field, a spring and children?”

“You enumerate the accessories and forget the principal figure which constitutes the novelty. If you only knew what kind of female forms usually appear in these beautiful landscapes of our lovely country!”

“You are unjust to your countrywomen.”

“Oh! do not flatter them.”

“I have an interest in that, you see.”

“Spare them the humiliation of comparing yourself with them, Bertha. I think in going to Lisbon for an education you were following the instincts of a superior nature. Your father who thought his resolve to send you there was a spontaneous one, merely obeyed, unconsciously, a secret force which constrained him. Your spirit stretched out

its wings to the city, where alone it could find its proper element."

"You are quite mistaken. I felt like an exile there ; and since my return I feel so well that I am convinced this is my true home, this air the right one for me to breathe."

"No, no ; I do not think so ; nor do I believe it possible for you to enjoy living here, Bertha, with all the natural aspirations of such a spirit as yours unsatisfied."

"Why, Snr. Mauricio, what kind of a spirit do you imagine me endowed with? What aspirations are you talking of?"

"Why do you feign ignorance? Tell me if the life of the majority of the three or four thousand people of this region would satisfy you?"

"I trust that it will."

"And what will become of your imagination, of all that is natural to our age, if we were not born a Manoel do Portello, or a Maria d'Azenha?"

"Pardon me ; perhaps it is because I was born only Bertha da Povia, that I do not trouble myself about the matter."

"You misunderstand me, Bertha. There was not in my words the least idea of aristocratic vain-

glory. Thank Heaven, I am free from that absurd mania. I will be bound that among the famous members of the noble families around here, there is not one who in spite of his seven or eight names feels this that I am saying. But you, Bertha" —

"O, Snr. Mauricio! I speak in all sincerity. Do not imagine me what I am not; or at any rate, do not say what you do not feel. Believe me, my aspirations are very trivial and commonplace. I am satisfied with these everyday cares, and beyond them I do not feel at ease. To please my father I followed the course of education he laid out for me, but I never really enjoyed it, and always longed for the country and its interests."

"I believe that you better appreciate all these to-day, because your faculties have been developed to discern the poetry they suggest."

"Poetry!" repeated Bertha, shrugging her shoulders with a forced show of contempt.

Mauricio noticed it. "You laugh?" he asked.

"Because," she replied, "I have heard so much said on this subject; and, if I must tell the truth, I do not know what it is all about."

"You don't know what poetry is?"

"I know what is written in books, but beyond

that," — said Bertha, simulating a tone of thorough ingenuousness.

The arrival of the children, begging their sister to take them home, interrupted the dialogue at this point, and Bertha took a friendly leave of Mauricio, who followed her for some time with his gaze.

"Is it possible that I can be mistaken?" thought he. "Can she be, after all, an ordinary woman, carrying on the prosaic conditions of the family? I'll not believe it; she is rather artful and dissimulating; under this apparent simplicity of tastes lies mind concealed; and either I am much mistaken or that is not indifference she feels when talking with me." And he wandered off, turning over these thoughts in his mind.

Bertha, laughing and playing with the boys, also thought, "I believe I accomplished something. It is necessary to turn him away from this idea; he will soon weary of it if I make myself appear commonplace and incapable of understanding him. I cannot answer for myself, and I do not want to be tried. They call me a sensible girl; whether I am or not, I dread the struggle. I doubt myself. Sometimes when with him, I fear — I know not

what; but I will not risk my own peace of mind. I must control my heart."

The rest of the day passed uneventfully for Bertha, except for the visits of some of her relatives. She was amiable to all, notwithstanding some over-curious questions as to the details of her city life. Luiza never tired of admiring her daughter's appearance and manners, looking from her to her visitors, in whose faces she saw reflected her own approval and pleasure.

The evening was consecrated to the family, and then came Thomé's turn to question and comment, Luiza often answering for her daughter, wishing to show how much more she already knew about it all than he.

It was growing late and Thomé was wondering at Jorge's delay, having sent him word that he had matters of importance to communicate relating to their business in Lisbon and Oporto. The barking of the dogs and a knock at the gate at last announced his arrival, and they heard him ascend the stone steps outside.

"There comes Snr. Jorge," said Luiza to her husband.

"Yes," he replied, "we have enough to discuss."

"I will light the lamp," she continued, going out to prepare the room used for these conferences.

Jorge was not without some emotion as he entered and found himself face to face with Bertha and the danger he had so vaguely apprehended. So great was his agitation that his limbs trembled as he crossed the threshold of the apartment where Thomé sat with his daughter.

He cast a rapid but penetrating glance toward her, and as immediately withdrew his gaze, his mind not at all calmed by this first scrutiny which convinced him that his fears were no imaginary ones.

Bertha, understanding the different natures of the two brothers, received him with frankness, and was less on her guard than with Mauricio. It was not necessary to arm her heart against Jorge. His salutation was serious, almost formal, without the slightest touch of gallantry. Scarcely looking at her, he merely said, "Welcome, Bertha; I am glad you have returned to your home. I hope you have not forgotten an old acquaintance?"

"It is not my habit to forget, Snr. Jorge," she answered, observing him with some curiosity.

"Your memory, then, belies the usual saying:



that one soon learns to forget in cities. How do you like the country now?"

As he asked this question he looked at her, but averted his gaze as soon as their eyes met.

"As much as ever," replied Bertha. "Nature keeps our memories fresher than cities do. One may live for years away, but on our return the same trees and flowers give us welcome. If there is any change it is in the people."

"Do you find changes in them?"

"How should it be otherwise? We do not renew our spring."

Jorge began to turn over the leaves of a book with enforced interest, and his brow contracted as with an unwelcome thought.

Bertha, perfectly unconstrained, continued looking at him with the curiosity natural to a girl at sight of so sedate a young man, but when her father suggested that they look to the business in hand, she took her leave, and went in search of her mother.

"And what do you think of my girl?" asked Thomé.

Jorge murmured a few indistinct words of praise.

“Just see what education does,” continued the father. “Who would say that she had been born and bred here in this humble abode, and when it was worse than it is now?”

“Yes, education accomplishes much, but natural gifts aid,” responded Jorge, with a somewhat absent air.

“Certainly ; I think too if the girl had not aptitude—but how much she knows !—how well read ! I could listen to her day and night without tiring.”

A faint smile not unmingled with irony curled his companion’s lip, but he made no remark.

The farmer interpreted his silence as indicating his wish to begin their evening work ; but for this he was obliged to go in search of some necessary papers, and Jorge was left alone during his absence. Going toward a table near the window, mechanically he took up a piece of needle-work left by Bertha, but as quickly threw it down. Then he opened a book, which, by the elegance of its binding, could belong only to her. It was a copy of St. Pierre’s idyl—the history of the love of Paul and Virginia. He replaced it with the same strange smile which had crossed his lips more than once that evening.

“She reads romances,” he soliloquized. “By this time she imagines herself the heroine of one; is in love with the type most to her taste, and longing to meet with this ideal individual. It is just as I thought; like all the others: a girl of the period — pretentious, romantic. All the result of Thomé’s method, too — making these women live in a world of fancy and then bringing them into a world of realities; a sorry way to make wives and mothers of them.”

Jorge said this with a bitterness of feeling unaccountable to himself. Vainly trying to turn his thoughts in another direction, he continued:

“Who knows if this book was not purposely left here for displaying her knowledge;” and again he examined the inoffensive volume, as if thereby he might gain some clue to the intricate problem he sought to unravel. “There are few beside myself in these parts,” he went on, “who can appreciate it, so I am selected for the exhibition. Well, it is a girlish vanity; and besides, what have I to do with it? Let Mauricio inquire into it; it is all in his line.”

Thomé returned, and the two were soon at their labors; but the farmer observed that his colleague

was much less attentive than usual. Presently a sweet voice was heard from an adjoining room, singing a lullaby to a child :

“ While the children softly sleep  
Their angels, who behold  
Always the Father’s glorious face,  
Withdraw the gates of gold

“ That on each stainless baby brow  
His gaze divine may rest;  
And bending o’er the cradled form,  
They smile in rapture blest.

“ No dream of ill shall visit now  
The slumbers which they guard,  
Nor evil spirits hover round  
Where these keep watch and ward.

“ *Sleep, baby, sleep, they watch in love —  
The bright ones near and God above.*”

Jorge listened to the monotonous and melancholy chant which characterizes most lullabies, with more pleasure than he chose to express. As to Thom  , he was enchanted. His daughter’s voice found its way direct to the loving father’s heart, moving him to gratified tears. As the last notes died away, the younger man arose. It was already late, and time to close their labors, but another motive also actuated him. He felt powerless

against these maidenly wiles, forearmed though he had resolved to be; and while persuaded that Bertha had taken advantage of the occasion to display her sweet voice, he chafed angrily against the conviction that her tactics had succeeded. Hastily taking leave, Jorge passed through the corridor from which another door opened into a room dimly lighted by a lamp that revealed the figure of Bertha, bending with loosened braids over a cradle, and smiling lovingly on its little occupant.

“Good-night, Snr. Jorge,” she said cordially, frankly extending her hand as she stepped forward to meet him.

“Well, is the child asleep?” asked the father, peering cautiously into the room.

“Hush!” said his daughter, raising her finger, “he is quiet at last. I brought him to my room, because he kept mother awake. Good-night, father.” And taking her father’s hand, she kissed it affectionately.

“God bless thee, my child,” he returned, touched by this simple act. And Jorge, with a quiet “Good-night, Bertha,” followed him to the front door. The young girl went to her own room and turned the key in the lock.

Once on the road the young man inhaled deep drafts of the fresh air as though striving to throw off a weight which oppressed him. He bared his head and went on over the rough path which led to Casa Mourisca.

"I am mad; what have I to do with that girl?" he murmured. "I begin to see that it is not so easy as I thought to have common sense. Now in Mauricio this sort of thing would be all in keeping. And a mere schoolgirl, too! And a flighty one at that, most likely. This is the last time — pshaw! I shall sleep this off."

But the picture of that room, with the sleeping infant and the lovely female form, finger on lip and an almost maternal solicitude on her expressive face, haunted him like some vision of a Paradise seen only in dreams.

Mauricio, returning from a ball in the neighborhood, found his brother, contrary to his usual habit, seated at his window, his head on his arms which rested on the sill, and so absorbed in thought that his approach was unperceived.

"What are you doing there?" he exclaimed.

Jorge started, and answered, smiling, "I believe I was asleep. I was warm, tired of read-

ing, and sat down here to breathe the cool night air."

"Oh! all right; only the least irregularity in your usual ways surprises me."

"I am surprised, too; but to-night I felt indisposed for study."

"Well, take advantage of this indisposition. Dash it! you are giving more attention to the estate than it is worth. Frei Januario did it for years well enough. 'Tis a splendid night—the party at the Curujaes was not at all bad."

"Oh! you have been there?" Jorge returned.

"Yes; quite a crowd. That Vencencio grows more and more stupid; Dona Anna sang Norma, of course; Ermelinda of the Nogueiral, with her head decked out with ribbons, looked like a vessel dressed with flags; Antonio Rodrigo's boys were in convulsions of laughter at her. That little girl of Joan Tavares', Dores, is not bad looking; a few more months passing over the child will transform her into a beautiful woman. But it must be late; there is not a light even in Thomé's house; not even Bertha keeps us in countenance to-night. By the way, have you seen her yet?"

“No — yes.”

“No — yes? What makes you so distraught? How did she strike you?”

It was some minutes before Jorge answered: “Well enough.”

“A curt reply.”

“What would you have me say? I have not your faculty of exhausting my eloquence upon the first woman who presents herself before me.”

“And what of your suspicions?”

“I could not decide.”

“Well, I have decided. I find her more and more adorable.”

“Ah!”

“I saw her this morning.”

“Indeed,” Jorge responded, but with evident constraint.

“Yes, I did; and flatter myself that I was quite ingratiating; in spite of a certain reserve, I believe I have no reason to complain. Certain youthful recollections — you understand.”

“Quite natural,” agreed Jorge, feigning to repress a yawn. Suddenly extending his hand, he added, “Good-night, Mauricio. I am very sleepy.”



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE JUSTICE OF THE PEACE.

THE next morning, at his father's summons, Jorge repaired to his apartments. On his entrance the irascible old man pointed to an open letter on the table, bearing, as he saw at a glance, his cousin's signature.

"It was not a happy idea of yours, knocking at that door," his father remarked; "she might as well not have written at all."

"How so?"

"Read for yourself and see."

The letter ran :

MY GOOD UNCLE :

Upon my return to Lisbon from a visit to Spain, I was met by the agreeable surprise of a letter from you. I felt flattered that you should seek advice from me, the "madcap" as you thought of former days. Life and my widowhood have sobered me and I trust improved my judgment in most matters, but you have imposed upon me a most difficult task. To find a career suitable for our dear Mauricio and yet "one

in which he will not be obliged to adopt the ideas and conciliate the opinions of the age" is an impossible mission. Under such restrictions he will never be able to obtain any situation worth having. This is an era of advanced thought and enlightened principles and I assure you that few are contented to remain pillars of the throne and altar, while the rest of the world moves on. It has occurred to me that the deputy-ship of one of the electoral districts might be suitable; it is a fine opening for young men of intelligence and ambition; but doubtless the popular urn is among the prescribed things which your son is not to conform to. So you see, my uncompromising uncle, that with the best wishes on my part, I feel my hands tied. I intend soon to visit my property at Bacellos, and purpose on my way to stop and see you all, when we can better discuss the subject *viva voce*. Meanwhile believe me your attached (though radical) niece,

GABRIELLA.

P. S. If Mauricio will accept a cordial greeting from his cousin, pray offer it to him, and also Jorge, who I hear has an excellent judgment at twenty years, which, between ourselves, has been rare in our family.

The easy style and independent tone of a spirited woman, accustomed to deferential consideration from all around her, in the unrestrained expression of her opinions was naturally at variance with all her uncle's antiquated prejudices. Jorge divined at once the effect of such a letter upon his father.

"Let us wait," he said soothingly; "she is coming, and we can talk it over then."

"What have I to say to such a scatter-brain as she? I wish she would stay away."

“This is only Gabriella’s way; but she will give it serious thought,” replied his son.

“Her way, indeed! But this is going too far. That is not a letter for a young woman to write to an old man, and her uncle besides,” and he threw it aside with an air of profound disgust.

Finding his efforts to calm his father’s irritation unsuccessful, Jorge left the room; as for himself, he was quite satisfied with the baroness’ communication, accompanied as it had been by a private note to himself, assuring him of her co-operation in his views.

Half an hour later he encountered Mauricio in riding costume, singing gaily:

“Give me some lovely spot  
’Mid Nature’s fairest scene,  
Where my white gleaming cot  
Shows through its leafy screen” —

“A rather unreasonable desire,” said Jorge, smiling. “Gabriella has just written to say that she will soon be here to discuss by word of mouth our proposed measures of reform.”

“Well, if her plans for my future involve my departure at present, I shall not be inclined to

adopt them," said Mauricio lightly, resuming his song :

" While through the sunset air,  
Soft smoke-wreaths are upcurled,  
As the vesper hour of prayer  
Rings peace to the weary world."

"Halloo! what has developed this sudden devotion to the rustic?" asked his brother ironically.

"Oh! a mere fancy."

"But you are not in a position to indulge your fancies. Mauricio, I fear you will make but an indifferent man of business, even if the opportunity should be offered you."

"Oh! Gabriella's good sense will solve the problem of my life in some other way. Good-by! I am going to see — you know whom," and he ran lightly down the stair.

"Well," soliloquized Jorge, after a momentary contraction of the brow, "it is but natural; but I must to work," and, turning, he shut himself into his own room.

Mounting his horse, Mauricio rode towards Thomé's house, which he passed and repassed, greeting Bertha at the window each time with a

smile and a bow ; the third time, however, she, with commendable prudence, did not appear.

Well satisfied with his morning's work, the young noble continued his ride through pine woods and over rough pathways till he reached a neat substantial house fronting on the road. Entering through a courtyard filled with farming implements and domestic utensils, he approached an open door, from whence issued a babble of voices, laughter and songs, and through which the red glow of a wood-fire was visible. Having fastened his horse he stood for some time unobserved, contemplating the picture within. It was a large farm kitchen, with an immense fireplace. Benches were arranged along the walls, and high shelves containing native earthenware, pots, pans, etc. Suspended from hooks were rows of onions, and in the vast chimney numerous well-cured hams ; in short, all the evidences and usual accompaniments of well-to-do rural life. In the midst of a feminine legion of busy servants, sat the owner of the establishment, like Calypso surrounded by her nymphs, superintending all and dividing the tasks with method and intelligence. This was "Aunt" Anna do Védor, of whom we have already heard,

to whose efficient care in childhood the young heirs of Casa Mourisca owed so much. Covered with flour, her sleeves rolled up, her face the color of the scarlet handkerchief on her head, loud-voiced, agile in spite of her fifty years, and quick of sight, Mauricio's presence did not long escape her.

She rushed toward him with open arms, exclaiming, "Oh! my darling child" —

"Look out! look out, Anna! you will cover me with flour," called out Mauricio, endeavoring to avoid her.

"Well! and what then? Flour is bread, and bread comes from God."

And without more ado, she clasped him in her vigorous arms, leaving ample traces upon his garments of her cordial embrace.

"There, Nurse, see what a mess you have made of me!" said Mauricio, trying to shake himself free of the white disfiguring dust.

"So much the better; it will give you something better to do than gallivanting about the country, turning all the girls' heads with your nonsense. A fine young man I have reared!" and the admiring look she gave him seemed to threaten a second embrace.

"What harm there may be in me I attribute to the care of my nurse."

"Harm!" exclaimed Anna scornfully, "when all that saved you two from following the others was my tender care of you. Ah! that angel sister of yours. Never shall I recover from that pain. If I could have had the care of her! but, 'Those who can divine are sent to the cells \*': of the inquisition Transto.

"You seem to be making great preparations here to-day; don't forget my bolo, † Nurse," said Mauricio.

"Ah! those were good times when you youngsters used to eat my bolo like manna from Heaven. Forget! no, indeed — mind your work," she continued in the same breath to the gaping girls behind her; "did you never see a gentleman before? — But what brings you here now, Mauricio?" Anna asked.

"Only a ride."

"Hum! there's more than that in the wind. Take care you don't bring trouble on any one belonging to me, or we shall have business to settle. I have two buxom nieces; h'm! h'm! if you only

\* An old Portuguese proverb.

† A kind of hoe-cake.

had Jorge's good sense. By the way, they say that he manages the estate now."

"Yes; for some time past."

"Ah! I never liked that friar. And as to the fidalgo, he is a good man, but he can't manage his own affairs. And what are you doing?"

"I? Oh! I amuse myself."

"Indeed! my young gentleman can do nothing else," exclaimed Anna scornfully. "You are wrong, Mauricio; from what I hear, your affairs are in no state to be trifled with."

"What has become of Clemente?" asked Mauricio, abruptly changing the subject.

"My Clemente? I am sure I can't tell. Since he has been made justice of the peace he thinks of nothing else. I must say he does his duty, but I know no more of him. Oh! I remember now; he is at Thomé da Herdade's. You know his daughter has returned from the city — that Bertha whom you used to call sweetheart — you were always a rogue! They say she is quite a lady, with her father's absurd notions, and that she was much admired in Lisbon."

Tired of inaction, Anna turned, recommenced her labors by vigorously kneading the bread



dough in the trough to its proper consistency, then passing it over to an attendant, she continued, as if there had been no pause, "Do you know she would be just the wife for Clemente?"

Mauricio started. "Who — Bertha?"

"Yes; why not? Whom should she marry? A fidalgo would not marry her, and without partiality my Clemente is better than any of the clowns about here, especially since he became a magistrate. Why, he talks to the mayor and to the civil governor, when he goes to Oporto, and they write to him. And it is Your Worship here, and Your Excellency there, and Thomé's daughter has been accustomed to all these things and cannot do without them."

"No, no! Anna, undeceive yourself; Bertha has been too well educated, is too accomplished, too refined" —

"Oh! you make her out too patrician for my boy. Why, I remember her father a barefooted boy who kept the cattle."

"Doubtless; but she has mingled in good society in Lisbon, and" —

"Suppose she has; so has my Clemente," declared Anna, all a mother's fondness speaking in

her words. "Nonsense! don't you be going about with your eye on that girl; she's no fool, like the others."

"O, Anna! that she is not like the rest, I well know; she is an angel."

"There, didn't I say so? We shall have her head turned. Look out, my boy! Her father is a determined man; he will brook no trifling with his daughter. But here comes Clemente; we shall hear what he has to say."

Clemente, the only son of the sturdy, outspoken matron, was a genuine country youth, of limited intellect, but excellent disposition, as was evident in the expression of his commonplace, good-humored face. He had accepted the office of justice of the peace with no little complacency, but exercised its functions with the rigid impartiality of a conscientious magistrate, dispensing even-handed justice alike to the poor as to the rich, whose feudal arrogance and contempt of rights he firmly withstood. Actuated by high principle, he had, by his rigid adherence to the strict letter of the law, incurred the displeasure of his official superiors, whose standard of practice, notwithstanding their eloquent theorizing on the subject of equal rights,

was less severely unaccommodating towards the antiquated prejudices of the old nobility.

Our good Clemente already perceived that his exalted ideal of duty was, if not impracticable, certainly detrimental to his own popularity. He was ardently attached to the young fidalgos, especially to Jorge, who was his foster-brother, and who, unlike Mauricio, had never caused him any perplexity in the discharge of his public functions. For the latter, Clemente excused his irregularities on the plea of evil companionship, but resolved not to spare him, if he caught him in any flagrant act of infringement of the game laws, or participation in the nocturnal brawls of his cousins, the fidalgos of Cruseiros, whose manner of life was modelled upon that of the old feudal days, ignoring all rights of property and trampling under foot every restraint against their patrician instincts. There were three brothers; the eldest, or Morgado, the second a physician, whose course at Coimbra had been a discreditable failure, and the third who had been ignominiously expelled from the parish over which he was the priest, by the indignant populace.

This lawless triumvirate was a disgrace to the

neighborhood. Jorge more and more withdrew from men of such habits, but Mauricio still associated with them, and not seldom was led by them into questionable doings.

On this occasion, as Clemente entered, his evident agitation led his mother to suspect some new vexation connected with his official duties, and she exclaimed, "What now, my son? You look vexed!"

"Oh! let me alone, mother; I shall never have a moment's peace until I resign this position."

"What was it?"

"Just what it was yesterday, and will be to all eternity, until we deal indiscriminating punishment to high and low. It is incredible that people of breeding should be capable — a priest, too."

"Oh! the Cruseiros are the culprits, are they?" replied his mother, as she glanced toward Mauricio, whom until that moment Clemente had not perceived.

"What is the trouble?" asked the fidalgo, interrupting the apology which the other would have offered.

"Well, these gentlemen seem to hold themselves exempt from the law. They do not seem to recog-

nize that the time is past for defiance of the powers that be. They are now secreting a conscript deserter against whom I have a writ; and they openly avow it; just as they hid away the assassin of the rector of Feiras and helped him off to Brazil. But these things must cease; if I am not mistaken, the mayor will see to it this time."

"Not he," interrupted Anna. "He is hand in glove with them all. Let them alone, and have nothing to do with the matter."

Clemente shrugged his shoulders.

"Either I shall be a justice of the peace or I shall not; I certainly will not serve the cause of injustice."

"Oh! come, Clemente, pardon their pranks, for they are really your friends," suggested Mauricio.

"I neither believe in nor desire such friendship," was the reply.

At this moment there was a shout from the street.

"Halloo! Mauricio, what are you doing there — baking bread, or courting the bakeress?"

"Ha! ha! my young fidalgos, what's that you say about the bakeress?" said Anna. "Be off! my house is no hunting ground for harriers like you.

Let Mauricio alone; you have done him harm enough by your evil counsels and example," she added, as Mauricio stepped forward, laughing at his nurse's lecture, whilst Clemente remained in moody silence, gazing at the lawless swells in their braided riding jackets, crimson sashes and broad sombreros, carrying their spoils at the triggers of their guns and surrounded by their dogs.

"Come, come," broke in the padre, "cease your talk which does not quench our thirst, and bring us some of your new wine;" and without further ceremony the two entered the court, laying aside their guns and other paraphernalia. The doctor seated himself on the kitchen steps and the padre took up his position upon a wood pile.

"Pray, gentlemen," said Anna do Védor, looking at them defiantly, with arms akimbo, "do you suppose the laws of the land were not made for you?"

"What is the woman talking about?" exclaimed the padre contemptuously; "here, give us the wine."

"What am I talking about?" retorted Anna; "my Clemente here, can answer you better," and she pointed to her son, who now stood in the doorway.

With a supercilious inclination of the head to the justice of the peace, the priest, turning to his brother, muttered, "He bears us a grudge for hiding the sugar planter's son."

"Remember," whispered Mauricio, "he was only discharging his duty."

"Mind your own affairs! how long is this court of justice to last and we go without our wine?"

At this moment two serving men appeared, each bearing a jug of wine which Clemente courteously offered to his unwelcome guests.

"None must ask my hospitality in vain," he replied; "not even the guilty and unruly."

His visitors eagerly swallowed the draughts.

"Well, well," said the doctor, as he finished his libation, "don't be angry, Clemente. You're not a bad fellow, after all; only a little set up with your new dignity; but understand that from time immemorial our house has been an asylum for all who need it."

"A doctor of laws should know that punishment awaits those who harbor a deserter."

"Oh! yes, the law says a great deal, we all know, but let the law alone and it will be quiet."

"But should the mayor order a search?"

“Let him try it,” interrupted the padre, with a sinister smile.

“He has the right,” persisted Clemente.

“Well, let him rest content with the right.”

“There must be an end, sirs, to all this,” said Clemente, with rising irritation; “it cannot be allowed that in any house law and authority should be defied.”

“Well, try it, Clemente; send on your posse of policemen, and command the attack yourself. It will be a good joke, but I advise you not to push this matter too far. Laws are very good things, but a man who has a will of his own is not going to submit to them.”

“He must be made to submit!”

“Ha! ha! hurrah for the Justice of the Peace! Your servant to command, sir!” and with a bow of ironical politeness he shouldered his gun, and turned to leave, followed by the others, the brothers each snatching a kiss in passing, from two of the girls returning with their water-jars from the spring.

“Where were your wits?” demanded Anna, as the maids ran in, “that you did not fling the water over their heads?”



## CHAPTER XII.

### AN UNEXPECTED TURN.

“WHERE are you bound?” asked the padre as Mauricio joined them outside the courtyard.

“Nowhere in particular,” replied the other.

“Then come with us.”

“What’s in the wind?”

“Come and see.”

“Jose had two fine casks from Douro, yesterday,” laughed the doctor.

“There you go, letting the cat out of the bag.”

“I’ll go, but you must take my road.”

“What now? If ’tis a question of black eyes and flowing locks, by all means let’s have a sight of them.”

“Eyes, hair — every thing in perfection,” said Mauricio, proceeding to enlarge enthusiastically upon the charms of Bertha.

“Where did you unearth this paragon?”

“She has only just arrived; a daughter of Thomé da Herdade.”

“And so out of the common?”

“I can only tell you that I grow madder and madder about the girl. I never saw such beauty. Fancy my indignation when Anna Védor said just now, that she would make a nice wife for her son!”

“Ah, indeed! His Excellency proposes to ‘*se ranger*?’ but how about the beauty — surly or accessible?”

“She is just a little on her guard as yet.”

“What’s her name — Bertha?”

“Yes.”

“Bertha, Bertha, my love,  
Bertha, my sweetheart,  
Queen of flowers thou art;  
Tra la la, tra la la, my dove,”

sang the padre as he climbed a wall to reach some tempting oranges.

“Better leave those alone,” called out his brother; “the citizen’s house is his castle, as they say.”

“Yes,” replied the padre, astride of the wall, “but this is no house, nor is a villager a citizen;” and he let himself down with an armful of fruit,

which he proceeded to share with the others, as they all pursued their rollicking way.

Reaching the Herdade, the padre said, scanning the windows, "Where's the girl?" "How do you summon her; cough, whistle, sing — what's your system?"

"I have none."

"Don't you enter the house?"

"No; my father would be displeased did we visit Thomé."

"Oh-ho! father scolds," snarled the other; "then what the plague have you brought us here for? Let's be off — or stay; we'll try this gate."

So saying, he opened a small wicket, through which he passed followed by the others, to Mauricio's shame and embarrassment; suddenly the padre whispered, "Tell me, I'm not a good huntsman," and stepping aside, he pointed to Bertha, at the end of the walk.

Thomé's daughter had just helped a young girl to lift a load of hay to her head, and thus engaged did not see the party of intruders.

"What a perfect figure!" murmured Mauricio; "like Ruth among the gleaners."

"Yes, the figure is all right, now for the face,"

said the padre, advancing with bold familiarity towards Bertha, who, hearing footsteps, had turned and was regarding them with surprise.

“Blame Mauricio,” he continued, approaching her with an impudent leer. “He has extolled your beauty so eloquently, that we could not resist the desire to see it for ourselves.”

The girl colored vividly at this coarse speech, and turned upon Mauricio a look of reproachful inquiry.

“Pray excuse my cousin’s want of breeding,” he said deprecatingly; “he is but a wild boar, whose bristles need smoothing down.”

“Better that than a curly lapdog,” sneered the other, “and I maintain that it was he who brought us here. He is over head and ears in love with you, you know, and wanted to show you off! You were not visible, so I opened a breach in the redoubt,” and he pointed to the gate through which they had effected their entrance. “If this be an offense” —

“I am quite sure,” interrupted Bertha, who had by this time recovered her self-possession, “that Snr. Mauricio would bring no one into my home with the intention of offending. He never forgets

that I was his sister's companion and his father's goddaughter; such ties are respected in his family."

"And will always be held sacred, Bertha," answered Mauricio; "and others shall be taught to do the same."

"Oh! spare your ferocious glances," laughed the padre. "I am not going to fight you; the young lady has taken no offense, you see."

"Enough of this," broke in Bertha; "here comes my father."

Thomé's honest face betrayed his annoyance at seeing the Cruseiro fidalgos with his daughter, and even Mauricio's presence failed to appease him; the more so that Bertha's countenance bore evident traces of displeasure.

"Your Excellencies do me much honor," began the farmer.

"Yes; we did enter like schoolboys, without leave or license; but you will not take it amiss, Thomé."

"Amisss? No, indeed! You doubtless wished to see for yourselves how the land, which was going to waste in aristocratic hands, thrives in a laborer's."

"Exactly; and we were so fortunate as to encounter Miss Bertha — the beauty of the neighborhood."

"Ah!" replied the farmer, turning to his daughter with a kind smile, "your mother requires you, Bertha."

"I will go," she said, and bowing to the others, with an "*Au revoir*" to Mauricio, she turned away, thinking as she went, "I shall no longer be afraid of him nor of myself."

"Your home is a paradise indeed, Thomé, with the angel thrown in."

"Bertha is a good girl, and one day will be a good man's wife, I hope; but she is too sensible to have aught to say to young gallants who come buzzing about her, and I should make an end of such as easily as I should of a wasp's nest," and he led the way to the gate.

"You are polite to show us the door, Thomé; our farmers were formerly more hospitable; but we have seen what we came for."

"So I thought," replied Thomé, and, lifting his cap, he closed the gate.

"I wish I had never brought you here," exclaimed Mauricio as the gate closed on them.

“You seemed not to perceive how refined a girl she is, and her father, let me tell you” —

“Her father,” broke in the doctor, “is an impudent boor. Those last words of his sounded not unlike a threat.” And, greatly discomfited, the young men retraced their steps.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### BERTHA STILL.

JORGE had been less assiduous in his visits to the Herdade of late, and Thomé could not divine the cause. He sent him a note the afternoon of the day of the young men's visit, begging him to come that evening.

Jorge appeared as usual, but Thomé received him with some constraint, and leading him to a more retired room, to Jorge's surprise, he closed the door, and then, in evident embarrassment, he began: "Snr. Jorge, I know you are my friend, and I am going to speak frankly to you, like an honest man."

"You cannot speak in any other manner, Thomé."

"Well, to the point, then. I have a daughter, and it is my duty to watch over and protect her as long as she has not a husband."



“Certainly,” murmured Jorge, who began to grow somewhat embarrassed, without knowing exactly why.

“Well, you are a sober, quiet young man, but you know well enough that at the age of eighteen or twenty years, even the soberest young man or woman all of a sudden may have their heads turned. Is it not so?”

Jorge, more and more uneasy under these reflections of Thomé’s, replied, “Perhaps so; but why do you ask me this?”

“I will tell you. My Bertha is a sensible girl.” Thomé was too intent upon his subject to notice that Jorge reddened. “I am sure of this, and she has had advantages of education which I may have been wrong in giving her. It might have been natural if she had fancied some city lad, but these country lads — well, they do very well for such as my Luiza. What I fear the most are these young fidalgos who have nothing to do but go about the country, turning the girls’ heads; and there is one in particular” —

“Who?” interrupted Jorge.

Thomé hesitated a moment, and then said, “Your brother Mauricio.”

“Mauricio?” repeated Jorge, with contracted brow; “has he given any cause of offense?”

“Not much; it is more fear. But to-day, for instance, he did something very displeasing to me,” and Thomé recounted the scene of the morning, adding, “I am not at all afraid of the Cruseiros, but Mauricio is different; in spite of some wildness, he is at heart good and generous—a handsome fellow, and they have known each other from childhood, and she is but eighteen—in short, I wished to know if you cannot induce your brother to leave the girl in peace?”

Jorge felt a tightening at his heart as he heard these words. It was certain, then, that Bertha loved Mauricio.

“I will speak to Mauricio about this matter; no doubt much proceeds from thoughtlessness, but he shall be made to respect her.”

“That’s right,” said Thomé, shaking him by the hand; “I thought you would say so.”

“He will probably be off soon for Lisbon.”

“Good! He has plenty of ability.”

Jorge took his leave without touching upon their usual business. As he crossed the parlor, he observed Bertha sewing at a table.

"Why, you are leaving early this evening," said she, with a cordial smile, extending her hand to him; "the lesson was short."

"Sometimes one learns more in such," said Jorge, in a cynical tone.

"Indeed!" returned Bertha, not heeding the tone; "we have not met for some time."

"I believe we have not."

"I see Snr. Mauricio oftener; only yesterday he passed."

"Yes," said Jorge, with a malicious smile; "Mauricio has the art of showing himself every day to all the beauties of the place."

Bertha looked her surprise. Something in his tone wounded her.

"Oh! does he take the pains of showing himself to all?"

"Probably," said Jorge; "and it would seem as if all took the trouble to appear to him."

Bertha remained silent, with her eyes cast down on her work, nor did she respond as usual when Jorge held out his hand at leaving, but merely said quietly "Good night, Snr. Jorge."

"She is offended," thought Jorge; "then there is some foundation for Thomé's apprehensions."

And Bertha on her part, thought "Why is he so severe with me? He must have some prejudice against me, but what have I done? Does he imagine I am fascinated by Mauricio's attentions? He is of so serious a character, he perhaps condemns me on that account. I fascinated by Mauricio! Just at first there may have been some danger, but his is not the character to attract me."

These reflections were interrupted by the entrance of her father, whose mind was now quite at rest since his interview with Jorge.

It was a lovely moonlight night in the early autumn, and Jorge lingered for a time in the chestnut grove, lost in thought, from which he was aroused at a late hour by the strains of a popular love song. Some one was singing at the farther end of the grove. Recognizing Mauricio, he shouted to him.

"Who calls me?"

"It is I."

"You, Jorge? Has arithmetic brought you to this?"

"I came home a short time since, and felt suffocated in there; besides, I wish to talk to you."

"Your tone is so grave and serious, one may suppose the subject is a solemn one."

"You are not mistaken, Mauricio. Thomé sought me to-day to beg something of me."

"I thought as much," said Mauricio, with a half-smile. "Have they been complaining of me?"

"I fear with some reason."

"Now, Jorge, I tell you what, you and I regard such matters very differently. I confess that Bertha pleases me greatly, and I try to see her every day, and talk to her about the crops — the heat of the day — but that's no reason why they should regard me as a Lovelace, or Don Juan; there is no foundation for this tragic terror with which they have inspired you."

"It is not tragic terror, it is mortification. Bertha is the daughter of an honest man, and you should remember that she was the friend and companion of Beatrice."

"Do I not remember that! It is an additional reason for loving her."

"Love," exclaimed Jorge. "What a love! when you take your cousins of the Cruseiros into your confidence, and proclaim it to the whole world."

“Is not this the best guarantee of its sincerity?”

Jorge, without heeding his words, went on with increasing earnestness.

“I have never been led away by one of those grand passions you talk about, but if ever I do love, whatever I may feel shall be confided only to the woman of my love. She only shall say, ‘I alone know the depth of that love which no one suspects.’”

Mauricio stood in amazement at Jorge’s excited manner, and thought, “Will wonders never cease?” but his brother recovering himself said laughingly, “I believe this beautiful moonlight has bewitched even my phlegmatic spirit. But come now, Mauricio, promise me you will leave off your attentions to Bertha.”

“What a ridiculous promise. There is no earthly reason why I should not see the girl from time to time; besides, I have no actual cause for supposing that she returns my affection.”

“But you cannot foresee what the effect might be in time, and so I ask of you, in the name of Beatrice, that you will not persist in seeking Bertha. Will you promise?”

And Mauricio ended by giving his word.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A LISBOËTA.

A FEW days after the conversation between the two brothers, Jorge was aroused at an unusually early hour by the gardener, who was now employed within doors. The man had a frightened look, which communicated itself to Jorge as he started up and inquired what had happened.

“The baroness will soon be here ; some of her luggage and servants have already arrived, and there is nothing prepared.”

“I thought it was something worse. What should be prepared?”

“Why, you know she is a great lady ; the padre has already given orders to borrow the silver service of” —

“Borrow nothing. The padre need not trouble himself ; I will look after whatever is necessary.”

"But you see, Snr. Jorge, the fidalgo himself will not like " —

"Do as I say. I am surprised at you, an old soldier, to conceal our poverty which is really no disgrace, from our cousin. We display our vanity before the families who have silver services ! I shall do nothing of the kind."

The old soldier shook his head, but ended by saying, "You are right, as you always are. I remember when the Emperor " —

"Leave that story for another time, and go and attend to your affairs while I dress."

Within half an hour the bells on the mules attached to the baroness' conveyance were heard.

Gabriella, the young Baroness of Souto-Real, was somewhat under thirty years of age, and looked even younger. A delicate featured blonde, she was the type of an elegant woman. Essentially feminine by nature, she had more control over her passions than her caprices. Of cheerful disposition, and withal somewhat satirical, but never malicious, she was considered one of the most spirituelle of the Lisbon beauties. Her salon was frequented by the first artists and men of letters and politics. Never severe with the faults of others, she did not



hesitate to take the hand of the biggest hypocrites she met in society, prompted by her native excellence and generosity, while guarding at the same time her own high standard of morality and justice.

Gabriella had made a marriage of convenience with a man older than herself, not of noble family, but belonging to the moneyed class which form the modern aristocracy. She proved a faithful wife to the man who had saved her from the precarious condition in which the ruin of her house had placed her. At his death she did not appear as the inconsolable widow, neither was she anxious to lay aside her weeds. Her beauty, wit and wealth naturally drew around her a host of admirers, whose attentions after awhile became distasteful, and to escape from these she was constantly undertaking little journeys. It was after one of these, to Spain, that she decided to visit the provinces.

Such was the little Baroness of Souto-Real, who now arrived in the court of Casa Mourisca. Jorge assisted her to alight.

"Thanks, Jorge," she said, pressing his hand; "you do the honors of the castle with the courtesy of a perfect knight."

"You must excuse the humbleness of this reception, but I thought you would rather take us as we really are than in borrowed plumes."

"Oh! assuredly. In this cordial, frank reception I recognize your true nobleness;" and thus conversing they ascended the steps which led to the drawing-room.

At the door they were met by Padre Januario, wiping his lips after a preparatory libation.

"Excuse my not appearing until now, my lady Baroness; the duties of my office" —

"Oh! do not mention it. Where is my uncle?"

"The fidalgo has not been notified of your arrival, and is still in his room, but I will go" —

"No — no — no! do not disturb him. I will curb my desire to kiss his hand, and pass the time with my cousin Jorge."

"Then, by your leave" —

"Au revoir, Frei Januario. Oh! by the way, that great day of which you spoke the last time we met — that day of redemption — has not yet arrived?"

The friar shrugged his shoulders.

"It is not yet too late, my lady."

Gabriella, laughing, entered the parlor with

Jorge. "And Mauricio, has he begun to shave?"

"I believe he departed by the light of the stars, on a hunting excursion."

"That's right; I see he keeps up the family traditions."

Jorge smiled.

"You are the renegade, it seems. I am so accustomed to the exclusives whose only concern is to keep their blue blood pure from vulgar admixture, that to find a man of sense descended from an old stock almost startles me."

"That is more flattering to me than the nobility in general."

"I speak frankly. And now tell me, are the finances in bad condition?"

"Very bad."

"That is not surprising; 'tis a fashionable complaint. And you undertake to straighten them out?"

"I am trying to."

"And you will succeed, I am confident. You are one of those men who carry out what they undertake without any fuss. I should like to transport you to Lisbon where there is such a want of good financiers. And how about Mauricio?"

“Mauricio” —

“Oh! I understand. He is more difficult to establish, though it might not be so, were it not for my uncle’s prejudices. Tell me, Jorge, are you an Absolutist?”

“I? I have no decided opinions upon politics, Cousin.”

“Yes, I see; you are like myself, liberal at heart, of course, but not liking to depart from family traditions.”

“Perhaps so; certainly much good has been accomplished.”

“I agree to that. Now Mauricio could find some career, if your father would let him go without too much display of the red and blue ribbon.\* I can tell you many an Absolutist has grown stout under the shade of the Constitution.” †

“My father is in a very irritable state.”

“Then the only alternative is to hunt about for some descendant of Egas Moniz or Martin de Freitas, whose house still stands upright, and graft it upon your genealogical tree.”

“A poor remedy so far as finances are concerned; but here comes Mauricio himself.”

\* Don Miguel’s colors.

† Granted by Don Pedro.

The baroness ran to meet him, and extended her hand, which he took and raised gallantly to his lips.

“Bravo ! I see you keep up the good old fashion of gallantry to ladies. If you could see the present style of nonchalance towards the fair sex, which degenerates often into downright rudeness !”

“Really ? but in the presence of some beautiful women one feels the obligation of certain courtesies, without thought of fashion or conventionalities,” replied Mauricio.

“Pretty well for the backwoods !”

“Don’t you jest at my provincial sincerity.”

“And you must not calumniate the provinces by giving that title to your sincerity.”

“Very well ! but now how are you after your journey ?”

“I suppose I shall feel tired after I have satisfied all my curiosity. In the first place, what are your plans for the future ?”

“Oh ! Cousin Gabriella, I thought it was only in the country that one wasted time over the future, which may change from one moment to another.”

“I understand this subterfuge. My young cousin Mauricio has no definite plans of his own,

but I wish you to understand that I came here for the purpose of arranging something suitable for you."

"Look here, Cousin, Fate has been so hard as to force me to take up some employment, but why should it be made doubly hard by my being obliged to choose for myself. Just arrange it among yourselves, and I will willingly subscribe to it, be it for general or notary, it matters not."

"I misdoubt such complacency. I perceive more serious difficulties ahead than your father's implacability. Are there any Romeo and Juliet episodes in these groves?"

"Do not speak of that to Mauricio; you touch a tender chord," said Jorge.

"Oh! then there are Juliets?"

"Juliets, Desdemonas, Ophelias — every possible type; a whole swarm constantly on his heart."

"Oh! so you decline love in the plural? I was not aware of that."

"Let him talk, Gabriella; Jorge knows that I am so entirely absorbed by one image, that his accusation of inconstancy is without foundation."

Jorge frowned and said dryly, "I thought you had resolved to be sensible."

“This is not a time to discuss the question,” said Gabriella; “Uncle Luiz is coming.”

Don Luiz bore himself with the air of a courtier as he entered the room. He was scrupulous and elegant in his simple attire; a majestic presence that inspired respect. The baroness bent to kiss his hand, but he folded her in his arms.

“O, Uncle Luiz,” said the gracious widow, looking at him, “just the same; not the least changed!”

“No?” he replied, with irony expressed in tone and smile.

“No, you are not, and it is natural. If you have had bitter trials, the quiet and comfort of your life in this pure atmosphere, and with the devotion of your sons, goes very far.”

Don Luiz shook his head sadly.

“At your age, Gabriella, wounds quickly heal; it is different at mine.”

“But you have such an example before you in Padre Januario; see with what resignation he bears his fasts and vigils.”

Even Don Luiz could not but smile at this.

The padre reddened.

“You must be tired, Gabriella,” interrupted Don Luiz; “I hope they have been attending” —

"All is ready," said Jorge, "when my cousin desires to rest."

"I do not care about that just now, but I should like a warm beverage."

In response to this, one after another left the room, until only Gabriella and her uncle remained. It was Gabriella who broke the silence.

"Did you receive my letter?"

"I did, and thank you for it."

"Rather say you forgive me. I am conscious that the style may not have been in keeping with your ideas, for I have been in the habit of writing only to those to whom I write familiarly."

"There was nothing to censure in the letter. I see only that I must renounce any projects I had formed for Mauricio."

"Pardon me; but what did you see in my letter to lead you to this resolve?"

"From beginning to end there was but one idea, and that was that Mauricio must conform to certain things."

"And which of us in life has not to conform?"

"Gabriella," said Don Luiz, with some asperity, "ages and ideas differ entirely. At your age it is easier to bend than at my sixty years."



“That is precisely what I say : Mauricio is young, and it is hard to expect him to sustain the weight of a dead dynasty.”

“Dead dynasty !” said the old man, raising his eyes to the ceiling.

“Dead, Uncle. Heaven pardon me for talking politics with you at this time, but no one can live in the world as I have, and not become convinced that such a dream as you indulge in — is — is only a dream.”

“Gabriella, your father died for such a dream.”

“And I venerate his memory, just as I venerate your character and your opinions — as I venerate all honest convictions. All I maintain is, that you ought not to sacrifice more than is necessary ; your own life and happiness you have a perfect right to sacrifice, but not that of your sons.”

“It is their honor which is at stake !”

“And who told you that they shared your convictions ?”

Don Luiz’s eyes flashed fire.

“If my sons” —

“I know what you are going to say, but do not say it,” interrupted his niece, “because your own acts give the lie to it. You have educated them

in a manner to fully develop their reasoning powers."

"And their reason must show them the truth."

"The truth! the truth, dear uncle — who can tell exactly where it lies? We find at each step as we advance, the refutation of some preconceived idea."

"I see your intercourse with society has imbued you with a good dose of philosophy. As for me, I hold still to the old catechism."

"And what do you intend to teach your sons by it?"

"To show them by example, how adversity may be borne, when we have traditions and a name to respect."

"I do not see that nobility calls upon us to bear adversity with our hands folded, when we might use them to drive it forth. Jorge comprehends this, and we must guard against Mauricio's enforced idleness destroying his energies."

Don Luiz was about to reply, when the padre entered, to announce that breakfast was ready, and the cheerful voice and presence of the young baroness went far to dissipate the usual shadows that hung around that somber dining-hall.

That night she wrote a letter to one of her friends, which concluded thus :

“ From what I have told you, you can see that I have renounced those ideas of self-sacrifice with which I came armed, and you so warmly opposed. Jorge is even more serious than I supposed. I am quite sure he would not marry from interested motives, and his head is too full of calculations and accounts to fall in love, so I am not called upon in any way to sacrifice my dear Lisbon modes of life, in order to save this family with my fortune, which I do not very well know how to invest. This fellow if he ever should love, which is not very probable, will do it in some unheard-of manner. The other is a child, that no one could seriously think of as a husband.”

From this we may learn somewhat of the generous intentions with which Gabriella came to Casa Mourisca.

## CHAPTER XV.

### SURPRISES.

ON the following day, as Mauricio was saddling his favorite horse, he was joined by Jorge. "If you are going to the Cruseiros to-day," he said, "you might be the bearer of an invitation to the dinner which father insists upon giving to Gabriella to-morrow. For my own part I would leave these Cruseiros in their den. To all other guests I must send cards."

"Yes, I will invite them. A dinner at Casa Mourisca! Rejoice, O, ye shades of our ancestors!"

"Rather more reason to shudder," replied Jorge.

"Those rascals of ours have not given this poor animal anything to eat," said Mauricio, caressing his horse.

"A change of owners might be a blessing to him," returned Jorge, smiling.

Mauricio mounted, and was soon off for Cruseiros.

A more untidy, ruinous abode could not be found. It was high noon when Mauricio alighted in the court. There were heaps of offal, and piles of broken glass and crockery scattered about. Mauricio ascended the damp steps and entered the halls, deserted except by the fowls and pigeons which roamed at large whilst the servants, obeying the example of their masters, slept.

Only the "Morgado" was out, pretending to work with some few laborers. Mauricio went directly to the room of the two youngest, and after several knocks, a hoarse voice called out, "Who is there?"

"I, Mauricio. Open the door."

"Open it yourself," was the curt rejoinder.

Mauricio entered the apartment, which was suffocating with the fumes of tobacco. It was a spacious room, but disorderly and comfortless beyond description. Two iron bedsteads, a bottomless chair which served as washstand, bottles converted into candlesticks, covered with candle drippings, in one corner the guns, revolvers, bludgeons, in another bridles, with remains of a repast, and

cigar ends profusely scattered about. This mode of life delighted these two, recalling as it did their student life. When Mauricio opened the shutters, the occupants grumbled at the morning rays.

"What a set of lazy rascals you are," he declared, pulling out the only empty chair and seating himself astride of it.

"You'd better talk to us about an idle life."

"At any rate, I have already come from our place."

"What brought you here so early?"

"Early? It is twelve o'clock! I have come on a mission."

"From whom?"

"From my father, to invite you there to dinner to-morrow."

"Uncle Luiz gives a dinner to-morrow!"

"Yes; in honor of Gabriella, Baroness of Souto-Real, who arrived yesterday morning."

"What next?" said the padre, and turned his face to the wall.

"Bravo!" said the doctor, sitting up in bed and lighting a cigar. "That is a good deal better than Jorge turning book-keeper. Tell me, how is Gabriella looking?"

"Quite well; though, to tell the truth, I did not take particular notice."

"Oh! you are occupied in another. By the by," he said, "I had almost forgotten the great discovery we made last night, old fellow."

"What was it?"

At his brother's words, Lourenço sat up in bed, saying, as he prepared his cigarette, "Look out, Chico; remember how nervous Mauricio is."

"What is all this about?" asked Mauricio.

"A most interesting affair—we almost died laughing—and the best of it is, that we shall have much more fun yet."

"Do tell us what it was," insisted Mauricio.

"Last night Lourenço and I," said Chico, "went to a flax-tewing party at Martinho's—not at all bad; very nice girls, and good light, but about eleven o'clock there appeared some jealous young cubs, armed with poles, who made my blood boil."

"They were the same gang we met at the fair last month. I only wish I had broken Gaudencio's bones, when I left him in the road that day," interrupted the padre.

"Well," continued the doctor, "these men began to show fight, and I saw Lourenço's back was

up, so I went for the quince club I had left behind the door."

"That was unnecessary," said the padre, "I can look out for myself. They came out with us; I soon had two down, Chico took care of the third, and the fourth ran off. To cut off his path we came down the little lane, which brought us out just opposite Thomé's back gate; do you know it?"

"Perfectly."

"We did not see our man, but we saw something better. It was midnight — just opposite Thomé's door, you understand."

"What of it?" said Mauricio impatiently.

"A woman is like a weather-cock,  
That changes with the wind;  
Her love lasts but a moment —  
Only a fool sets on her his mind,"

sang the padre.

"Well, go on! go on," cried Mauricio impatiently.

"Why, my dear young cousin, prepare to tear your hair out by the handfuls. Thomé's door opened, and out came a night reveller!"



"That's impossible!" said Mauricio indignantly.

"Impossible, when we saw that it was a real live man!"

"And did you see who it was?"

At this the two brothers exchanged knowing looks, and the doctor said, "Not certainly, but we suspect."

"Who was it?"

"Here! no boiling over, if you please; that must remain for another time. We have seen the same fellow several times in that same neighborhood, and were therefore on the *qui vive*."

"Take care, Chico; Mauricio cannot bear these sudden blows."

"I? I don't believe one word of what you have been telling me," said Mauricio, rising from his chair and walking back and forth, evidently agitated.

"It is difficult to believe that a girl of eighteen, just from school, should have a lover!"

"But you don't know Bertha — and besides it does not follow that a man who comes out of Thomé's house at night should be in love with her."

"We would like to hear what you will say when

you see the man. Will you join us to-night to beat the bush for the hare?"

"Agreed," said Mauricio.

"What fun we shall have," said the padre, leaping out of bed. "Promise us one thing; that you will not commit murder in your jealous fury."

And thus it was arranged that the three should watch Thomé's house that night.

Mauricio was silent and thoughtful by turns throughout the day; so much so as to attract Jorge's notice. The baroness, using the privilege of a young and handsome woman, questioned him directly.

"You have not returned from your ride in a very amiable mood, Mauricio; what is the matter?"

"Nothing more than a change of mood we are all liable to."

"I hope it is no affair of the heart."

"The heart! Mine is a very modest one; it does not aspire to rule."

"Your answer betrays a thorn."

"Pardon my frankness, Cousin; but I see you have the feminine foible of imputing every variation in a man's mood to some woman's influence."

“And when men occupy themselves so little with serious matters we are apt to be right.”

“You are quite mistaken; men of my temperament are the very last to be affected as you say. We accept feminine inconstancy as a known fact, and therefore are not driven to despair, like those who make a worship of love, and believe that woman is cast in a finer mould, when they see the soap-bubble they had believed was crystal, dissolve in thin air.”

“I am more and more confirmed in my suspicions; you are too polite to have uttered such unflattering remarks against the weaker sex, if you had not been smarting under some slight.”

“Forgive my frankness,” he said, coloring.

“To-morrow I trust you will be more yourself, and we can then discuss plans.”

“Plans?”

“Why, have you forgotten what I came for?”

“O, yes! I am much obliged, but I fear this will be too much of a bore for you.”

“We will see.

Night drew on very slowly for the impatient Mauricio, but at length the hour agreed upon by the cousins arrived, and the three betook themselves

to the designated place. Mauricio, by this time, began to feel ashamed of the part of spy he was playing. He was beginning to joke the other two, after they had waited some time in vain, but the doctor covered his mouth with his hand, enjoining silence; and then, sure enough, appeared the figure of a man going along in the shadow of the wall to the gate, which he pushed open and closed after him noiselessly. Mauricio was about to run after him, but he was detained by his cousins.

“Stop, you dotard! wait until the man comes out; you will know him fast enough,” but Mauricio insisted on entering the court.

Here another dispute arose, which caused the dogs to bark, and a voice from a window called down, “Who is there?”

It was Bertha’s voice, and Mauricio, full of indignation, was about to reply, when the doctor again enforced silence.

The three posted themselves where they could be sure of cutting the intruder off, and waited for more than an hour before the figure again emerged, and they heard the gate locked after him. When about twenty paces from the house he was confronted by his watchers.

"May I pass?" he asked.

"After you have shown who you are."

"By what authority?"

"By the right of three to one."

"A right I do not acknowledge," said the man, disembarassing his arms and preparing for one of those aggressions not uncommon in the rural districts.

By this time Mauricio, who had been startled by the first tones of this individual, advanced to the front and exclaimed, "Why, it is Jorge!"

The cousins burst out in roars of laughter.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Jorge.

"Oh! nothing, nothing; we only wished to verify a suspicion. We would only beg you henceforth to be a little less severe upon others' weaknesses, seeing that a saint may fall."

Jorge, beginning to lose temper, turned to Mauricio, saying, "I will thank you to explain the meaning of these inuendoes, and of your presence here as if on the track of some burglar."

Mauricio, excited by the insinuations of his cousins, and finding Jorge there, was beginning to feel all the horror and dismay at his brother's dissimulation and hypocrisy and answered indignantly:

“You may as well lay aside your part of judge and censor, Jorge; I have believed in you until this moment; but now that all your hypocrisy and disloyalty are revealed, it is I who will have the right to question and censure.”

“Have you lost your senses, Mauricio?” Jorge asked in a tone of compassion, which exasperated the other still more, and he continued:

“Do you think I do not remember your words last night, when you exhorted me by the memory of our sainted sister to leave Bertha in peace? Yes; leave her in peace, that you might indulge your nocturnal adventures.”

“Silence!” commanded Jorge, in tones that cut his brother short. “You may insult me, if you please, but you shall not calumniate one who is not here to defend herself. I charge you to be silent, if you have a spark of honor left.”

“In place of lectures, would it not be better,” said the doctor, “to explain to us why you are here at such an hour?”

“I feel no obligation to explain before such judges.”

The two laughed maliciously.

“Do you think we cannot keep a secret?”

“I leave you to your own devices,” and turning to Mauricio Jorge said, “You have descended the first step of infamy, consenting to act the spy; take care you do not descend the second by helping to malign a respectable family; it is so easy to insult the lowly.”

The cousins heard this parting shot with exceptional forbearance.

Mauricio was beginning to feel remorseful towards his brother and said, “I think we have been acting infamously.”

“Do you? Well, go and ask the brother’s pardon,” said the padre, laughing disdainfully. And each went their ways, Mauricio in a very downcast mood, between remorse and suspicion.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE FEAST INTERRUPTED.

THE usually quiet household of Casa Mourisca awoke to an unwonted sense of bustle and activity on the morning of the state dinner.

Jorge had vainly endeavored to oppose this lavish ostentation, so unbecoming their diminished resources, but his father was inflexible. The guests, representing the bluest blood of the province, gradually assembled, and dispersed themselves in various groups about the great drawing-room, while awaiting the announcement of dinner. The elders discussed the abolition of the entails, and certain leading articles in the *Nation* and the *Direito*. The young girls conversed on dress and fashion, casting from time to time tender glances at some of their male cousins hovering near, most of whom, however, were on the veranda smoking or firing their revolvers at trunks of trees or some passing bird. Among these last was Mauricio,



wearing a somewhat melancholy air ; Jorge was attentive to every one, but seemed even more preoccupied in mind than his brother.

They had not exchanged a word, and Gabriella felt sure that something had occurred, but this did not prevent her from playing her part with all the tact and grace so characteristic of her. She went from group to group with pleasant and flattering words to each, which dissipated the jealousy and suspicion with which those conservative spirits regarded her new-fashioned ways.

One circumstance aroused the baroness' curiosity. She noticed that all the young men who had been in conversation with the Cruseiro cousins would follow Jorge with looks of mischief, and when his back was turned give way to smothered laughter. Then the girls followed suit, whispering from one to another, until at last it reached the neighborhood of Gabriella, who asked,

"What is that you are relating, my little cousin? There must be something very funny, you are all so excited."

"Oh! haven't you heard? Jorge has a sweet-heart!"

"Is that anything so very wonderful?"

"You don't know Jorge; why, he never paid a girl a compliment in his life. We all thought he could never care for any one, and lo and behold!"

"He is of that rare kind," said Gabriella, "who loves only once and does not regard love as a pastime."

"That may be; but think what he has fallen into!"

"Who is the object?"

"Bertha; Thomé's daughter!"

"I am as wise as ever."

"Don't you know Thomé — Thomé of the Herdade? Why, he was formerly a servant of Uncle Luiz's, and he is now a rich man."

"Oh! yes, I do remember; she is a country girl."

"With a varnish that idiot of a father chose to give her," said one of them.

"Did Jorge know her?"

"Yes, in childhood; but they have seen nothing of each other of late years."

"And how was this discovered?"

"He was seen to leave the house late at night."

"Jorge?"

"Yes; our cousins of the Cruseiro saw him, and Mauricio, too, I believe."

“Ah! Mauricio?”

“Yes; and the best of the joke is, that Mauricio had pretensions in that quarter, too. Only a flirtation, of course. The result is, that they have not a word to say to each other.”

“Yes; I had remarked that. If what you tell me is true, Jorge must be in earnest.”

“Do you mean that he will marry her?”

“Yes; if he really loves her.”

“That would be a joke! Cousin Bertha da Povoa!”

Gabriella watched the two brothers more closely, and became convinced that a coldness had sprung up between them.

Don Luiz now appeared at the door of the drawing-room in all the dignity that so well suited him. All pressed forward to salute him.

“Where have you hidden yourself all these years? What a fortunate thing that Cousin Gabriella came to draw you out of this lethargy. You require diversion.”

Don Luiz answered all with a forced smile.

“When the mind is filled with sadness, better the solitude of one’s own chamber.”

“What a novel idea! the enjoyment of sadness.”

"It seems a contradiction," said Gabriella, turning to her uncle, "but has it not been said that in these sad memories there is a 'bitter pleasure' and a 'grateful pang'?"

"Who said that?" asked a spectacled fidalgo, rather sentimental and literary.

"Almeida Garrett."

"Almeida Garrett?" repeated one of the most rabid Royalists present.

"I once knew a man of that name who was secretary, or something of that kind, to the Duke of Palmella in 1834; he was an ultra Radical."

"And did you lose sight of him?" asked Gabriella, half ironically.

"Yes; he was only a chance acquaintance."

"Then you did not know of him as an orator in Parliament — minister, poet, prose writer and chief of a literary revolution?"

The fidalgo opened his eyes.

"As to Parliaments, ministers and such matters I do not feel much interest; a revolutionary chief I can well believe him; he seemed cut out for a guerrilla chief."

The announcement of dinner here cut short the fidalgo's speech, and Frei Januario, who had con-

stituted himself master of ceremonies in placing the guests, was disconcerted by Don Luiz calling from the head of the table, "Pray seat yourselves as you please, young and old together."

Gabriella passing Jorge at the foot of the board, whispered smilingly, "Every one is talking of you."

"Yes," was his reply; "they may have more to say presently," glancing at the two younger Cruzeiros, who occupied seats near the upper end of the room.

It was truly a dinner "*à Portugueza*," and worthy of Portuguese, who care not for "*nostrum regnum ire fore de Portucalensibus*."

The soup was taken in comparative silence, and then followed the usual clatter of a dinner table. Jorge remained serious and reserved. Mauricio made vain efforts to appear at ease.

Towards the close of dinner the laughter and jokes became more pointed, the cousins of Cruseiro talking in tones loud enough to be heard by Don Luiz, who frowned in displeasure.

Healths were drunk; Gabriella's, the heads of the chief families, the chiefs of the Royalist party, etc. And when these successive libations had somewhat excited the party, the padre cousin rose

to his feet, not quite steadily, it must be owned, and said: "Gentlemen, I have remarked that our cousin Jorge has a fit of melancholy, which even these various toasts have not dissipated. It is true they were mostly to things of the past; old things are not so amusing, so I shall propose a toast less dull to try and rouse him. I drink to the health of Thomé da Herdade and family, especially his daughter Bertha!"

This unexpected toast caused somewhat of a sensation, excepting to the younger portion of the party, who were convulsed with laughter.

"How is this; is there no one to second me?" he asked, glancing round the table with an ironical smile, which faded as his eyes encountered the pale visage of Jorge as he rose to his feet also.

"I second you, Cousin," he said, with a slight tremor in his voice, "and I do it with good-will; for it is to the health of an honest, laborious and respected family, and I have especial reasons for esteeming them."

"Ah!" said the padre, as he seated himself with a triumphant air.

"Stand up," commanded Jorge, and his cousin, strange to say, meekly obeyed.

“I repeat again, I drink to the health of an honored family, and that you may choke this venomous serpent you have let loose, I will give you the reasons why I venerate this family.

“I awoke one day with the firm resolve of struggling against this torrent which seemed to be sweeping us off our feet in spite of all our escutcheons and parchments and galleries of portraits! I was young, and could not resign myself to the idea of dying thus ingloriously. I happily found aid in my father, who entrusted to me the administration of the estate, but I found it a more difficult task than I had calculated upon. Capital and credit were wanting, but in my hour of need a man came to me, and, in the most loyal spirit, offered me his experience and capital. Thanks to this man, I have begun to hope that I may say one day to the ashes of our departed ancestors, whom I also respect, ‘Rest in peace! no alien shall come to scatter you to the four winds’; and that the sacred memories of my mother and sister would still linger about these places they so loved. Against the generous aid of this man I knew there were old prejudices of family, but my conscience did not hesitate between these and the real glory of my

house, and therefore I had to work in the dark ; only at night could I seek counsel from him. On one of these visits I was surprised by those who measure others' actions by their own, and always suspect some infamous motive. This man has a daughter ; the poor child, it seems, has been the chosen victim, for calumny always aims at what is purest and most sensitive. Now if you wish to know the name of the man to whom I owe so much I will tell you that it is Thomé da Herdade, and his daughter Bertha, is my father's godchild. Her calumniators are those who proposed her health, mixing the poison of the viper in the cup. Drink, I say, for I second you without fear or hesitation."

"I too," said the baroness, following his example, but no one else joined, for all eyes were turned in another direction.

Don Luiz's agitation had increased as Jorge proceeded with his narrative, and it reached its climax when his son pronounced the name of Thomé da Pova. As he finished his father rose to his feet, but for some time could not command his voice sufficiently to say : "Gentlemen, when I invited you to this house to celebrate the arrival of my niece, it was under the conviction that I was the



owner of it. I was not aware that my eldest son, the future representative of our family, had so far abused the confidence I had reposed in him as to pawn the home of his ancestors to a former servant. Pardon me for having subjected you to such humiliation. We are now all on equal footing — the guests of Thomé da Herdade, and as my duties are at an end, I shall take the liberty of following the dictates of true dignity. Each one can consult his own.” And Don Luiz, bowing low to the dismayed assemblage, left the hall, Frei Januario promptly following. The rest of the company seemed lost in a maze of thought. Jorge, with his elbows resting on the table, covered his face with his hands.

Gabriella was the first to recover herself.

“It seems to me,” she said, “after what has happened that nothing remains but for us to separate. Uncle Luiz is much agitated; we must give him time to come to a more reasonable frame of mind.”

These words were followed by all rising and preparing to depart. The Cruseiro cousins were among the first. The padre expressed a wish to beg Jorge’s pardon, but was dissuaded from doing

so. The road from Casa Mourisca was soon alive with every species of conveyance, the occupants talking over the strange occurrences of the day. All criticised the rudeness of Don Luiz, yet with one accord each agreed that the principal blame was attached to Jorge.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### BACELLOS.

JORGE, Mauricio and the baroness were left alone in the apartment. Don Luiz's indignation seemed to deprive Jorge of all energy; Mauricio was equally overcome, and felt the bitterest remorse now that he could no longer doubt Jorge's innocence.

The baroness thoughtfully contemplated the two brothers. Mauricio, after a moment's hesitation, made a sudden movement toward his brother, exclaiming in tearful agitation, "Jorge, if your noble generosity is not yet exhausted, do not withdraw all your affection from me."

"Never," returned the other; "your indiscretions and extravagances, so at variance with your better nature, pain me, but never chill my love."

And cordially embracing, both turned towards Gabriella as she came forward, saying, "Now that

peace is concluded, we must consider the present situation. First of all, Jorge, what is the real truth in this affair?"

"What I related."

"I never believed these slanders; but tell me frankly, is Bertha wholly indifferent to you? that is the point now."

It was difficult for Jorge to master himself sufficiently to answer, "Bertha is a girl I respect on every account," adding, "but nothing more."

"And how does Bertha stand towards Mauricio?" questioned she, turning to the other, who had no answer ready. "You see there is some mystery here. I was witness of your reconciliation, but what was the cause of your misunderstanding?"

"One of my follies," answered Mauricio. "I encountered Jorge, last evening, as he issued from Thomé's house, and gave vent to language which seems to burn my lips even now."

"It would seem as if you felt a right to be jealous. You must be in love with Bertha; but is it a veritable love?"

"If I should answer as I think now, I would take an oath that it is."

"That may be translated," returned the baroness, "that knowing yourself as you do, you fear it is not ; but you see, my dear young cousin, this is no time for sport. There has come a crisis in which all Jorge's good plans may be thwarted by his father."

Just then a servant entered with a message to the baroness. Her uncle desired to speak to her.

"We must await the result of this interview," she said, hastening to obey the summons.

In the corridors the servants were hurrying to and fro, and when she gained Don Luiz's room the baroness found Frei Januario bending over a trunk, murmuring, "There is no sense in this — leaving all one's comforts."

Going up to her uncle, who was directing the packing, Gabriella said,

"You sent for me, Uncle?"

"Yes ; excuse my troubling you, but I have a great favor to ask," he said, with forced calmness.

"A thousand if you will."

"After what has passed I cannot remain in this house another night. You spoke of leaving to-morrow ; will you make the sacrifice and go to-day and allow me to accompany you ? A room and a

straw bed will suffice for me, for I must now harden myself to every privation."

The baroness was unable to speak for some time.

"Why, my dear Uncle, of course I should be delighted to have you, but pray do not act too hastily. Just think what a talk there will be!"

"I think there has been enough already; the shame cannot be greater."

"The shame? Be sure, dear Uncle, that you are not judging your son too harshly. How do you know but that others may consider a virtue what you call a base action?"

The old fidalgo's eyes flashed, as he answered, "Gabriella, there is no use in opposing me; if you refuse to receive me, there are other doors at which I can knock."

"My house is always at your service, dear Uncle; I will give orders for departure."

"You need not wait for me; Frei Januario and I will follow later. I feel very sorry for all the trouble this will cause you, Gabriella; the servants can remain at the Encruzilhada Inn."

"There is room for all, if you wish to take them. Is Casa Mourisca, then, to be closed? There is one request I have to make."

“What is it?”

“Jorge is completely overwhelmed by your bitter reproaches; will you not be reconciled to him?”

“Gabriella, if you are a friend of Jorge’s, I warn you not to bring him before me now; and for the present not to mention his name.”

Without another word she left the apartment and sought her cousins.

“We must all prepare to depart.”

“Where?”

“To my house at Bacellos.”

“And our father?”

“Going also. Casa Mourisca is to be closed.”

“I must speak to my father,” said Jorge, starting up.

“Do not go; it is useless and dangerous; give him time to reflect.”

Shortly after this conversation they were on the road to Bacellos — Jorge, Mauricio and Gabriella in company, Don Luiz, after he had taken a sorrowful leave of all those places so dear to him, following with Frei Januario. He said to the servant who held the horses, “Go and await us at the Paúl.”

“Are you going on foot down there?” exclaimed Frei Januario in consternation.

“Yes, and now you may lock the doors, Frei Januario.”

The latter, seeing his patron take the opposite road to the Bacellos, exclaimed, “Where are we going?”

“This way,” said the fidalgo dryly, and the padre was obliged to follow, murmuring at every step against the vagaries of the old man.

“But where are we going?”

“To Thomé da Pova’s house,” and, added Don Luiz, “I am in no mood for talking.”

It was at the quiet hour of twilight. The last songs of the birds and the distant sound of the Angelus filled the air as Don Luiz passed along an avenue of poplars with hedges of roses and honey-suckles, which led to one of the entrances to the farmer’s place. This part was more exclusively under the charge of his wife and daughter; here grew hortensias and balsams, interspersed with violets and rose geraniums.

Don Luiz, slowly descending the avenue, asked “Is not that one of the entrances to the farm?”

“Yes.”



“In a very few years he will be able to buy Casa Mourisca cheap. My sons will not be very exacting.”

The padre knew not what reply to make. Arrived there, he was about to ring, but hearing voices inside, he pushed open the gate and Don Luiz entered resolutely, but suddenly exclaimed, with his hand to his heart, “Oh! merciful Heaven!”

“What is it?” said Frei Januario. His companion vouchsafed no answer. Instead he remained with his eyes fixed upon a certain point, from whence advanced a girlish figure, dressed in white.

“Oh! my godfather,” exclaimed Bertha. “I thought I was never going to see you again,” and grasping his hand she kissed it with deepest respect and affection.

Don Luiz did not withdraw his hand, but continued to regard her as if oblivious of all around him.

“What an age it is since we have met! How many times I have looked up at your windows, hoping to catch sight of you—but what is the matter? you are weeping.”

“Yes,” he said, much agitated, “when I arrived here and saw you it seemed to me it was my Beatrice. Strange I have never been reminded by any others ; but you are just her height — your coloring is the same, and even your ways and tone of voice remind me of my lost daughter ; strange, strange ! Bertha, how little you can imagine the longing I have to see my child.”

“Can I not ? Why, even yesterday, I shed tears over some of her old letters.”

“She used to write to you, then ? ”

“Yes ; the last letter was dated a week before her death.”

“Dear child ! and did she speak as if she knew her state ? ”

“Yes ; but she said she only confided it to me ; she would not sadden those around her.”

“Yes, it was so ; she never uttered a complaint, dear little angel.”

“Don Luiz,” said the padre, “night is upon us.”

“That is true,” cried Bertha ; “forgive me for keeping you here ; pray come in ; mother is at home. Father is in the city, and will not return until to-morrow.”

Don Luiz thus reminded of the object of his call

at once resumed a different tone and manner. "I came," he said with dignity, "to see your father. I heard to-day, for the first time, that one of my sons had been taking up money from him, without any guarantee, to improve the estate. I know not what the sum may have amounted to, but I cannot receive such loan or charity, and until the debt can be paid off, I give up the keys, which I hope to redeem in time."

The girl was so overcome that she mechanically took the keys, but recovering herself as speedily she exclaimed :

"This cannot be. You cannot wish to leave."

"Bertha, you are not a judge in such things ; this is a matter of conscience."

"Of conscience?"

"You may call it as one of my sons does, 'class prejudice'; but whatever it may be, I obey its dictates, and am proud to do so."

The fidalgo was about to depart, when Bertha said hesitatingly, "May I not be allowed to kiss your hand?"

At these words, the heart of the irritated old man softened. To the astonishment of Frei Januario, he folded the young girl in his arms, and kissed

her brow as he might that of a daughter. At the end of the avenue he turned sadly, and seeing Bertha still at the gate, he said, "See, Frei Januario, how much she resembles Beatrice!—as she used to stand awaiting us at the gate of Mourisca House."

"Yes; at a distance all girls look alike," returned the padre.

It was dark when they reached the old family mansion of Bacellos, which was to open its ample doors for the first time since the marriage of the baroness.

The morning after the arrival Gabriella went in search of Jorge. She found him in a pavilion where he had installed himself, far from his father's observation. She had heard from Frei Januario all that passed between Don Luiz and Bertha, and wished to consult him.

"How is my father?" he asked.

"A little less affronted, since he carried out some knightly code, and has vindicated his aristocratic dignity."

"What has he done?"

"He went and delivered up the keys of his house to Thomé da Pova. These old aristocrats have

their heads filled with notions of the Middle Ages, and they are always seeking for dramatic effects."

"And did Thomé receive the keys?"

"He was not at home; Bertha received them at the gate."

"And — what took place in that interview?"

"It was rather sentimental at first, but at last my uncle remembered himself, and then with a gravity worthy of Martin de Freitas, whom no doubt he had in mind, he delivered up the keys."

"Thomé doubtless will return them."

"I dare say; but it will only make matters worse. Your father is somewhat appeased now — but to the subject in mind. From the first, a woman's name appears, and although up to this time Bertha seems to have played a secondary part, no one can persuade me that she is not the principal figure. What do you think, Jorge?"

Jorge, evidently embarrassed by this sudden appeal, answered, "You are aware of all the facts, and are the best judge."

"But am I aware of all? I am not so sure. Mauricio has conceived a violent passion for her."

"I do not believe it," answered Jorge, with animation.

“Why do you think so?”

“Because I have known him to love many women in the same manner.”

“You do not believe in short loves? Once and for all, is your motto?”

“I think so.”

“That is all very well in theory, but supposing Mauricio should settle himself this time. Thomé would make an excellent father-in-law in this crisis, were it not for your father’s prejudices.”

“Never would I regenerate my house in that manner,” said Jorge.

“Oh! you have scruples, then? but I can tell you this is often done.”

“I know; but in a man it is ignoble.”

“I agree, where there is no love, but when there is” —

“So much the more honor in overcoming it.”

“I see; there is no use in trying to implant new ideas in the provinces. But now for another question: does Bertha love Mauricio?”

“Perhaps.”

The baroness was about to continue, but was interrupted by Frei Januario’s entrance.

“Ah! good morning, Frei Januario; how do

you find yourself in these ruins?" asked the gracious mistress.

"Excellently well; it is long since I have met with a cook who so well suited my palate."

"Yes; Gavion is a good cook, but take care how you praise him to his face."

"Oh! I will not say a word; but I wish to speak of weightier matters," and the padre drew a chair, coughed, hesitated, and then began: "Don Luiz called me to his room just now to confide to me anew the administration of the estate, and he ordered me to make this known to Snr. Jorge."

"My father's wishes must be complied with, and I hope he may have reason to congratulate himself."

"I did think my uncle had more sense," said the baroness frankly. "And do you feel able to disentangle this complicated skein, Frei Januario?"

"Now that is just the difficulty," said the chaplain. "It is true I attended to these matters for twenty years, but it is all so different now! and I am too old to learn."

"And what do you intend to do?"

"There is no use talking to the fidalgo; he is all on the high ropes if one opposes him, but I

have thought of taking the management apparently, and letting Snr. Jorge attend to it all, as heretofore."

"And will you take the entire responsibility, Frei Januario? You know to whom I apply for capital," said Jorge.

"That is nothing to me ; the house is yours, not mine ; you will feel any ill consequences more than I."

"This does not show much regard for our family ; I would prefer to see you vigorously opposed to the 'vicious administration,' as you call it, I have begun."

At this point the baroness interposed. She wished to know if there was any real fault to find in the present management, and concluded by saying, "I think it is best for Jorge to accede."

"It is very hard to continue to act in a clandestine manner, but I will not shrink from anything that may redeem my house," said he.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### RETALIATION.

WHILE the baroness, Frei Januario and Jorge were holding their conference, Don Luiz, restless and moody in his unaccustomed surroundings, was pacing to and fro in the grand entrance hall of the mansion, the portraits of his ancestors looking down upon him from the lofty walls. Harassed and perturbed in spirit as he was, the dreary apartment was the worst he could have chosen in which to find the peace of mind he vainly sought.

Suddenly, at the sound of an opening door, he turned and saw Thomé da Herdade entering through the portière. He looked travel-worn and excited, and exclaimed, as the old noble with a formal bow was about to withdraw :

“Have patience, Snr. Don Luiz, it is you whom I came to seek.”

"My agent will confer with you," coldly replied the fidalgo.

"I have no business to transact with him," said Thomé; "it was not he who insulted me."

"Indeed!" was the supercilious rejoinder, "you come, then, to demand satisfaction?"

"Every man has a right to ask the reason of his insulted honor."

Don Luiz, who had coolly turned his back and walked toward a window, whither the other had followed him, now paused, and facing his angry companion, said haughtily, "Do you intend violence?"

Thomé's resentment seemed to vanish as he met the eye of his former padrone; instinctively the old relation of master and servant asserted itself, and in a somewhat less aggressive tone he answered, "No; I only wish to know what you have ever seen in me to justify your acting toward me as you have?"

"You are dreaming, Thomé; I have never given you a thought in the matter."

"You insulted me when you handed over the keys of your house to my daughter, merely because I had advanced a paltry sum to your son, by a fair and business-like contract."

“It is not possible for you to comprehend my motives, nor shall I explain them.”

“You mean that it was the action of a nobleman, which I, reared beneath a straw thatch, cannot appreciate; but why, Snr., should that be an offense in me more than in others, who would have loaned the money at an exorbitant rate of interest?”

“I see that you are more conversant with my family affairs than I myself am, for I have been kept in ignorance; but so soon as my insolvency became public, my own dignity required” —

“Dignity! To my thinking, your son has shown truer dignity in working for the restoration of your credit, and in defending my innocent girl from the calumnies of those who boast the loudest of their high descent.”

“A truce to all this; we can never understand each other.”

“But we must, Snr. Luiz; you left my house openly insinuating that I was taking advantage of the inexperience of your son to draw the last drop of the family life-blood. Now I call upon you, before Heaven, to say what cause you have to suspect me of so base an act?”

“I have always believed you an honest, upright

man, Thomé," replied the old nobleman without hesitation.

"Then why this scorn for me alone, who served you faithfully and have shared your joys and sorrows? Why should your sons, under pain of your severest displeasure, have been prohibited from entering my house?"

"Oh! have done with this. What do you wish me to do?"

"To receive back these keys," said Thomé, taking them from his pocket.

Don Luiz thrust them back.

"This is useless; my resolution is formed."

"Then if you think they should be placed in the hands of creditors, seek out those who have larger claims than I have," said Thomé, throwing the keys upon the table.

Don Luiz regarded him angrily, but controlled himself.

"Take the keys, Thomé; if there are many creditors you can serve as their representative; in none could I place more confidence."

"Thanks for your confidence; but, let me tell you, this is nothing but pride."

"That may be; it is not uncommon in our days."

“I confess I see nothing to admire in this kind of pride. You think, perhaps, that my growing prosperity may overshadow your house; never fear that; and if so, why not let Snr. Jorge employ the talents God has given him, in raising your house to what it was formerly? Then indeed there might be reason for pride, but this looks to me very like envy.”

At these words Don Luiz started.

“Stop! Enough of your insolence! I tell you I will not receive those keys until I stand clear of debt to you.”

“So be it. I take the keys, but I swear that in spite of you, I will do you all the good I can. If my aid has humiliated you, have patience; for from this time forth I shall work as I never worked before for the restoration of your house.”

And Thomé da Pova, animated with this desire of an honorable and holy vengeance departed, leaving his old master sadder and more thoughtful than ever.

“That certainly is an honest man! Why am I so annoyed by aid from him? Envy!” and with this cry of conscience, Don Luiz hastened to shut himself in his room for the remainder of the day.

By daylight the following morning the still excited Thomé began to put his scheme of vengeance into execution. He gave orders that three laborers with farming utensils should be in readiness to accompany him as soon as he had breakfasted, which, contrary to his usual custom, he did in silence; nor did he indulge in his usual game of romps with the younger children. Even the wise and prudent Luiza, who had been a silent observer of all these signs of a perturbed spirit, was incited to conjugal opposition when her husband asked for the keys of Casa Mourisca.

“What are you going to do at Casa Mourisca?”

“To work, of course.”

“To work! have you hired it?”

“I hire it? Did not the fidalgo give me the keys? and there is much to be done there.”

“But are you thinking of putting all that in order?”

“I am; you see if I do not soon change the appearance of things there.”

“You have taken leave of your senses, Thomé. Just think of the sum it will cost!”

“Cost what it may, I am determined to put that house on firm footing, to pique the old fidalgo.”

“But you ought to consult Snr. Jorge.”

“He has nothing to do with this. Here, give me the keys of the gate; that will do for to-day. I shall not go beyond the garden.”

It was a sore trial to the good Luiza that her husband would not consult Snr. Jorge, for whose judgment she had the greatest respect, especially since the dinner at Casa Mourisca.

Bertha, who had heard the discussion between her parents, now gazed thoughtfully upon the old house. In the young girl's mind a revolution had been silently going on. She had returned to her village and seen Mauricio still surrounded by the halo of her childish love, and she had doubted if her heart could resist his many attractions; but we already know how that halo was rudely dissipated. In contrast with his, appeared the generous qualities of his elder brother, especially the loyal manner in which he had defended herself and family before his scornful relatives.

One other circumstance, strange as it may seem, served to heighten her interest in him; that was the coldness, almost hostility, concealed under a cloak of politeness, with which Jorge treated her. She sought in vain to fathom the reason of this,

and her observation and study of such a character as Jorge's had suddenly awakened her to the consciousness that she was thinking entirely too much of him for her own peace of mind. Hence the sadness in her countenance as she stood at the window looking up at the old house. All at once she started. Jorge, who no longer sought to conceal his visits, entered the court-yard, and dismounting from his horse, came into the room just as she turned to leave it.

"I fear that I intrude," he said ceremoniously, as the two met in the doorway.

"Not at all," she replied constrainedly; "but my father is not at home."

She dared not mention where he had gone.

"Do you know when he will return?" asked Jorge abstractedly, as he walked toward the window.

"No; but perhaps mother may know." And just then Luiza herself entered.

"Oh! Snr. Jorge, how glad I am to see you. What a pity you did not come sooner."

"And why?"

"Has not Bertha told you? Thomé has gone up to Casa Mourisca."



“What for?”

“Only Heaven and he know. He hurried through his breakfast and went off with three men talking about vengeance on the old fidalgo, to whom he should do all the good in his power.”

“Thomé has a generous soul, I know, but that will defeat all my plans. I must get this idea out of his head.”

“There! didn’t I say so? ‘Thome,’ I said, ‘you talk to Snr. Jorge,’ but it was no use talking to him. I will say there is no better husband than my Thomé, but if he once gets an idea into his head no one can get it out—unless perhaps you, Snr. Jorge. If you could hear how he runs on in your praise.”

“Thanks, Luiza.”

“Thanks for what? You deserve all that is said, and more too. I can tell you these eyes shed tears only a few days since on your account.”

“I made you weep, Luiza?”

“Yes; when I heard what took place at your house with those cousins of yours.”

“Oh! that is not worth talking about.”

“Not worth talking about! I can tell you that not only I, but Bertha wept.”

"Ah! I do indeed regret Bertha's having had cause of annoyance," he said in his habitual tone. Bertha made no reply.

"Annoyance?" said Luiza, "why, she ought rather to have felt most grateful. Have you no word of thanks, Bertha?"

The poor girl's confusion was still further increased by her mother's words. Jorge hastened to say, "I forgot to ask Bertha's pardon for having, through my inexperience of the world, given cause for gossip. I trust she can pardon so untutored a fellow."

Bertha was about to answer, but there was something in Jorge's manner as he said these last words that overcame her; and with tears in her eyes she arose and left the room, much to the astonishment of her mother, who remarked to Jorge, "Girls have extraordinary ways. I hope you will excuse her."

Jorge seemed equally disturbed, and almost immediately took his leave.

As he went out he encountered Bertha on the landing of the stairs. She said in a sad, rather tremulous voice, "I left the parlor without thanking you for all I owe to you, but, believe me, it was not because I do not appreciate it."

"You owe me nothing ; it is I who have to ask pardon."

"Let us say no more now," said Bertha, with a smile through ill-repressed tears ; "but some other day perhaps you will tell me why you dislike me."

Jorge started.

"I dislike you ?"

"You cannot deceive, Snr. Jorge ; there is some prejudice in your mind against me."

"Bertha, what nonsense !"

"I don't know—some day you will tell me ; you are too generous, too loyal not to do so ; and perhaps I could overcome the fault, whatever it may be. I would like you to be my friend, Snr. Jorge."

He was about to answer, when she interrupted him, saying, "Not now," and with these words she left him.

He mounted his horse and mechanically took his way to Casa Mourisca, pondering in his heart her words. "Poor girl ! perhaps I have been rude to her ; but what can I say to her if she should ask me ? Dislike ! if she could look into my heart. That is just what I fear ; but I will conquer this weakness."

As he turned and saw with joy, that Bertha lingered on the veranda, he perceived Mauricio ascending the road to the Herdade. He waved his hand to him.

“That was the reason of her lingering on the veranda,” thought Jorge bitterly. “Well, Mauricio can afford to be weak.”

The horse stopped in front of the gate. Jorge, aroused from his meditations, entered the garden and soon caught sight of the farmer and his men, hard at work clearing up the paths.

“What a festival,” said Jorge, advancing; “I should think you were preparing for some procession in which we were to be major-domos.”

“I do not say procession, but a festival in which I shall be major-domo there shall be here, so help me Heaven,” said Thomé.

“Thomé, I want to have a talk with you.”

“Not now; I have too much to do; moreover, if it is to dissuade me from what I have undertaken, it will be lost time.”

“Well, dismiss the men; it is near the noontide.”

“Here you have me!” said Thomé, crossing his arms, “what do you wish to say?”

Jorge took him by the arm and led him to the

pond, where they seated themselves on the stone border. "Now that we are alone, please tell me, Thomé, what means this game?"

"Game! do you think I am going to submit quietly to having any service I may have rendered, taken as an insult and not seek for retaliation?"

"I do not mean that you have not just cause to feel offended, or that you should not revenge yourself, but you never can do it in this way. I acknowledge that this may be more apparent than the more generous manner in which you undertook to assist me. You see that I shall be the one to suffer the most by your vengeance. If your intention be to humble me, persist in what you are undertaking, but if your revenge is as I believe more in keeping with your own character, then aid us in spite of the pride which would reject that aid, but do not humiliate us in the sight of others."

Thomé listened in silence, with finger on lip.

"Very well; I will swallow all my protests as best I can. I confess I never thought of you, Snr. Jorge. I was thinking only of the fidalgo. I see I was too hasty."

"I do not ask you to renounce your vengeance. I expect my father some day to acknowledge that

nobility is not found in parchments alone, and that a contract with an honest man honors him who makes it."

Thomé's eyes glistened as he pressed Jorge's hand, and the latter continued. "I am about to ask another favor. I have long thought of going to Oporto. I want to talk to the lawyers engaged in that suit of the Grange of Regnengo. I cannot help thinking that that document I showed you may be of much importance. If we could gain that suit half the battle would be won; so I thought when you were going to the city again I could accompany you, and perhaps you would introduce me to some of the lawyers and notables with whom you are acquainted. And there is yet something else. Thanks to you, I have freed the estate somewhat, but your generosity has gone to its fullest extent. I can allow no more sacrifices; but for what I have to undertake more capital is needed, and I have thought of the Land Credit which has been lately established — perhaps you could help me in this."

"Let us go to-morrow if you will," said Thomé.

"So be it."

Within half an hour Thomé entered his home

and informed his wife that he should leave the following day for Oporto with Jorge. Luiza comprehended that his plans had been postponed, and her admiration for Jorge's ability increased. The good woman had that morning got an inkling of something she hardly dared confide to her husband, and yet she could not keep silent.

"Thomé, what would you say if our daughter were to live in that house some day?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, you know when boys and girls meet constantly" —

Thomé colored, and exclaimed with annoyance, "Are you crazy, Luiza? There are some things you ought not to say even in jest."

"Why, what harm would there be?"

"Harm, Luiza? I wish you would not talk of such things," and the wife finding her husband so opposed desisted, but not the less did she continue to cherish her dreams.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### UNABASHED.

ONLY to Gabriella did Jorge impart his project. Don Luiz, who had held firmly to his resolution of not seeing his son, knew nothing of it. Since his interview with Thomé, the old noble had grown more irritable and petulant, especially towards Frei Januario, attributing to his negligence perhaps the downfall of his fortunes.

In Thomé's house work went on the same, even in the absence of the owner. Usually at such times Bertha had the management indoors. One afternoon, when her work was finished, she determined to satisfy a longing she had felt for several days to visit the scenes of her childish sports, and, taking the key of Casa Mourisca, she went forth. As she reached the bridge she heard the rumbling of distant thunder, and scanning the sky she saw unmistakable signs of an approaching tempest, so



dared not go on; at that same moment she also saw at the end of the bridge a horseman approaching. A closer observation showed her that it was Mauricio. She would have avoided him, but it was too late.

“At last I have met you, Bertha. It is such an age since I have seen you!”

“And you have tried, Snr. Mauricio?”

“Every day.”

“The surest way would have been to call at our house, where I generally am at work with my mother.”

“But should I be well received?”

“Has my father ever failed in receiving Don Luiz’s sons as they deserved to be?”

“As they deserve — that is the point. My conscience tells me I am not deserving.”

“Your faults must indeed be great for my father to forget the friendship he owes you and yours.”

“And may I hope the same from you, Bertha? have I not forfeited all your regard?”

“In the first place I do not know of what you are accused.”

Mauricio was silent. He was gathering his forces for a sudden resolve. Presently he spoke:

“Listen to me, Bertha, and then judge me. I am not going to make a confession of all my life, only the last part. The good and bad actions which this strange temperament with which I was born have impelled me to, are mainly attributable to one source: I have been under the influence of an absorbing passion. I tell you frankly that I love you, Bertha. You must have seen this from the first moment of our meeting. It is this love which makes me unjust, suspicious, mad — and drives me to commit deeds which fill me with remorse.”

“You should do all in your power to destroy so malignant a thing.”

“Do not jest, Bertha.”

“I do not jest. Did you not say that it led you into actions that caused you remorse?”

“It is because of my uncertainty. If you would assure me that your heart is as it used to be” —

“Snr. Mauricio,” interrupted Bertha, her tone becoming serious, “I should be wanting in friendship if I allowed you to continue. I will suppose that you are not jesting with me — that you are sincere, or at least believe yourself to be — and in this supposition I beg you to put aside all this

you say you feel for me — it can have no future.”

“Before you have the right to give me such advice, you must in your turn make confession and say, I cannot love you.”

“Then I do say, I cannot love you!”

“And are you sincere in this? Question only your own heart. As to outside difficulties, I will conquer them.”

“I say, I cannot love you. Were it otherwise, I should have said, ‘I ought not to love you!’”

“And why can you not? Is there any other love in your heart?”

Bertha blushed, but answered, “If there were there is no reason why I should confess it to the first comer. No, Snr. Mauricio, I speak in all sincerity; for every member of your family I feel the greatest respect, esteem and gratitude. Love is another thing — something not to be explained. No one can tell why he or she loves or does not love. And now I will ask you to leave me,” and, extending her hand, she added, “I hope you will always be our friend, Snr. Mauricio.”

“And yet I do believe she loves me,” murmured Mauricio as he pursued his way.

"There is an end to that one," sighed Bertha, as horse and rider disappeared from view, "I wish I could say the same of the other."

The same hour of the following day Bertha made a second attempt to visit Mourisca House. Upon reaching the gate, however, she could not make up her mind to enter. A feeling of awe took possession of her, and it was not until a third visit that she overcame her reluctance. Fitting the key to the lock, she pushed open a small gate that led into the garden. Her entrance was the cause of a great commotion among the feathered inhabitants of that lonely grove; this and the lengthening shadows of the twilight filled her with a sudden terror, but she summoned courage to remain for a short time among the scenes which recalled to her mind the pleasures she had shared with her dear Beatrice. It was too late to enter the house, so she left by the same little gate.

"Look there, Chico." Two sportsmen were descending a pine-covered slope near by. "Is not that Thomé's Bertha?"

"It must be."

"Alone at this hour near Casa Mourisca!"

"The house is empty, you know."

“Yes ; but Jorge or Mauricio may visit the hen-roost.”

“Mauricio went to the hunt at Monteiros to-day, and Jorge, I hear, is in Oporto.”

“*Quod probandum*,” quoted the other, recalling his scholastic lore. Then, fearing his companion might not comprehend his learned phrase, he added, “That remains to be proved.”

“It was Mauricio who told me.”

“The more fool you to believe what Mauricio says. But let us watch when the girl returns here, and bring along Mauricio ; that will be fun !”

“I don’t know about Mauricio ; he is rather offish since that dinner.”

“Oh ! I will tame him.”

From which conversation we may conclude that the Cruseiro cousins have not changed their habits, notwithstanding the lesson they received.

It had taken all of Don Luiz’s moral energy to enable him to accept his new life with composure and, as he considered, the dignity of a fidalgo. But he grew more and more restless and impatient, and only pride and a fixed idea of a nobleman’s honor prevented him from returning to his abandoned hearthstone.

One day when he had been for some time moodily contemplating from one of the windows the distant groves around Casa Mourisca, he suddenly ordered his horse to be saddled. The chaplain to whom he gave the order rang the bell for the servant, adding that the groom was to accompany him.

“And who told you that? I require no escort.”

“Are you going alone?”

“Yes,” said Don Luiz, continuing to pace the hall.

The chaplain departed to the kitchen, at a loss to know how he should account for all these changes.

Mauricio was not present at dinner. Don Luiz, as soon as the meal was ended, set off at a half-trot, waving his hand to Gabriella, who stood at a window, to bid him good-by. His seat was as firm as ever, and he rode with elegance. One would suppose that he had some object in view, as each step brought him nearer to his old home. At last he entered a steep lane just outside the walls, from which point of view he could see the trees and even the roof and upper windows of Casa Mourisca. It was a picture indeed. The old man, sitting his

horse like a statue in that twilight hour, regarding with tearful eyes his old castle, from which his own passions had driven him forth, his face lighted up by the last rays of the sun stealing through the distant oak branches. He seemed in truth the personification of discouragement and longing, with the added gloom of melancholy old age.

His horse at last became impatient and after pawing the ground for several moments made a sudden move forward. Don Luiz, roused from his reverie, gave him the reins. Arriving at a little hut partly in ruins, he dismounted, and fastening the animal, walked on until he came to a gap in the wall, through which depredators had often passed at night. In some trepidation he entered, led on by his longing desire, yet fearing he might encounter Thomé or some one else there.

On reaching the court he found a small door open, and fancied some one must be within. But all was silent, and he finally concluded that in the hurry of departure it had been left open. Gaining confidence, he ascended the steps; but half-way up a sound greeted his ear which caused his cheek to blanch. He would have fallen, had not the wall against which he leaned given him support. The

sound was that of a harp as if suspended from an oak branch, swept by the evening breeze. These were not strange tones. As he listened he recognized the instrument—it was Beatrice's harp. What mystery was this? Had the shades of the departed returned to earth? With tottering steps he continued to ascend the tower, and with every move the sounds became more distinct, until finally he recognized one of the airs his angel daughter used to sing. A deathly pallor overspread the old man's face. He was now convinced that this was some supernatural visitant. The hand extended to open the door fell powerless. "My God! my God!" he exclaimed, "if this is but a dream, let me die in it," and he fell on his knees before that mysterious door. "Oh! my daughter, if it indeed be you, do not leave without appearing to me."

The sounds ceased at that moment, the door opened, and Bertha, seeing Don Luiz on his knees, his face hidden in his hands, ran to him much agitated, exclaiming, "Oh! my dear godfather, pardon me."

At the sound of her voice Don Luiz raised his face and regarded her with a startled, inquiring look.



"Pardon me, Don Luiz," the young girl hastened to say ; "I see I have done wrong, but I had such a longing desire to visit these places."

The old noble appeared not to heed her words, and allowed her to lead him to a seat where, for a time, he seemed to lose consciousness. Bertha, kneeling at his feet, took his hands and bathed them in tears and kisses.

"If I could have imagined the pain I should cause you, I never would have come ; this is the first time I have dared to penetrate these precincts and I could not resist that harp. It was the tender recollection of that angel brought me here, and for her sake you will pardon me."

Placing his hands on Bertha's head, and smoothing back her hair, Don Luiz regarded her with paternal kindness, and at length said slowly : "Why should you ask pardon, Bertha? Is it for these tears? They are a blessed relief. I have to thank you for giving me a glimpse into heaven."

And, forgetful of the present, the two went on talking of Beatrice, Don Luiz showing Bertha many little things that had belonged to her. All at once steps were heard on the stairs, accompanied by the sound of voices.

“Is it your father, Bertha?”

“No; he has been absent these three days, and is not expected to-day.”

They listened again. “Let us hunt this side,” a voice was saying. “The old tower may well serve as a dovecote.”

Don Luiz started at the sound. “I see a door partly open — softly, softly,” was the answer.

“Courage, Mauricio! don’t lose any advantage of your position.”

“Mauricio!” exclaimed Don Luiz and Bertha in one voice. The latter grew deadly pale. Don Luiz turned upon her a look of suspicion.

“Did you hear?” he asked. “Do you know the meaning of this?”

“No,” returned Bertha, raising her gentle, pure eyes with a look that left no doubt in the old man’s mind.

“Very well,” said he, pressing her hand in token of protection, “let us wait.”

Don Luiz drew back a little in the shadow of Beatrice’s bedstead. Bertha leaned with her hand on the harp.

The door moved slightly, and Mauricio’s head

was thrust in, and behind appeared the malignant countenances of the Cruseiro cousins.

At sight of Bertha Mauricio exclaimed in a cynical tone, "Good-afternoon, Bertha; I hope we do not interrupt any sweet meditations. I certainly did not expect to find you here."

Bertha vouchsafed no reply. The consciousness that Don Luiz was a listener made her fear the consequences for Mauricio more than for herself. He continued: "We expected to find some one else here, for we saw a horse concealed in an old ruin; perhaps you can tell me something of the horseman. What means this confusion, Bertha?"

The girl trembled more and more.

"There is some mystery here," exclaimed Mauricio, still more vehemently. "If there is any one within earshot, let him come out and protect the honor of a woman."

He had scarcely ceased speaking when Don Luiz stepped forward and confronted his son. Mauricio started back as if struck by a sudden blow. "Here I am," said Don Luiz, after a moment of silence, "to answer any questions of my son and of those gentlemen who so modestly conceal themselves."

"Father," stammered Mauricio, with downcast

eyes. The Cruseiros retreated still further into the shade of the entry.

“Well! I see that I must take the initiative. What infamous motive brought you and your companions here? Was it to pursue a woman? Worthy diversion for gentlemen. You dishonor the name you bear! I blush for such a son!” he continued, turning full towards Mauricio, and contemptuously ignoring the others. “Bertha sought this chamber which should be sacred to every member of my family, drawn by tender memories of her lost friend, and all their holy associations, little dreaming to encounter within these walls a viper!”

The bitter emphasis with which the old fidalgo uttered this epithet beggars description. “Thank God, who led me here to-day to shield her,” and offering his arm, which Bertha mechanically took, he led her from the apartment, while the others humbly stepped aside, awed by the severe and dignified manner of the indignant old noble.

“I am a miserable scoundrel,” exclaimed Mauricio, sinking into a chair and covering his face with his hands, while his cousins looked at each other, as two schoolboys caught in a flagrant misdemeanor might have done.

## CHAPTER XX.

### FEMININE DEVICES.

ON the following morning, Don Luiz, having with his usual punctilio sent to announce his visit to Gabriella, entered her salon.

"Why not have let me go to you, dear Uncle?" she exclaimed, noticing his troubled expression. "You are not well."

"Only mentally," he replied, "and I have had a sleepless night. Gabriella," as he spoke, the old man passed his hand across his brow with a deep sigh, "the destiny of my race is accomplished. We are doomed! When we can no longer maintain our ancient splendor, when our nobility is sullied by actions unworthy of gentlemen, no earthly power can restore our prestige; all is lost!"

"But your sons."

"My sons!" and Don Luiz shuddered; "it is of them that I complain. Jorge has shamed me

by his undignified course, and Mauricio by his baseness."

"Mauricio! why, what has he done?"

Her uncle indignantly related the scene of the previous evening.

"Mere youthful wildness," replied Gabriella, essaying to defend her cousin.

"Say you so?" replied the fidalgo. "To me it savors more of an immorality which at twenty years betokens methinks a corrupt nature. What were he and his drunken companions going to do at Mourisca House?"

"Do you not know that Mauricio fancies himself in love with Bertha? And those wild cousins of ours are ever goading him on to jealousy of his brother. Believe me, 'tis all childish folly; nothing more."

"Infamous," muttered Don Luiz, not appearing to heed her remonstrance.

"Dear Uncle," pursued Gabriella, "it is this enforced idleness that is ruining Mauricio; send him away."

"Yes, I have thought of that; but the seductions and temptations of the great world, with his evil proclivities" —

“He has no evil proclivities that his talents will not overcome.”

“What is he fit for?” said the father despairingly.

“Drop all plans for future arrangements; only decide to have him leave. Let me talk with him; I am convinced that he will yet come out in bright colors. You shall one day be proud of him.”

“And how is all this to be brought about?” sarcastically questioned the old nobleman.

“By bravely entering a career of active employment, as his ancestors did before him; only every age has its special requirements, and in our time lance and saber cuts are not called for; your own good sense must show you this.”

“Did I not educate my sons? Nor did I prevent Jorge from taking up work; I even learnt a lesson from my child, and blushed at my own idleness and negligence, but I never thought of his receiving alms from a former servant of our house.”

“It was not alms; it was an honorable contract; but I will not argue with you about Jorge, for I believe that deep down in your heart, you have the conviction that Jorge is a noble, generous character, Uncle Luiz.”

“I never said he was otherwise; but, as you say,

Gabriella, do not let us argue further ; only let us think of getting Mauricio away, more on account of that poor girl, who is worthy of all respect ; let him depart, however, without seeing me," and with these words Don Luiz left the apartment.

Gabriella hastened to the breakfast-room where Mauricio always preceded her. She found him on the veranda, absorbed in the contemplation of a small cascade dashing down the side of a precipice and losing itself among luxuriant ferns, lighted up by the morning sun. He started at Gabriella's approach. "I did not hear you coming," he said.

"You were absorbed in thought. Does yonder abyss attract you? They have a fascination for some natures."

"No ; it is a social fall of which I was thinking. Some irresistible power seems impelling me towards a path which leads inevitably to the ruin of all my worldly prospects."

"Nonsense !" laughed his cousin ; "dismiss such tragic presentiments. I have other plans for you ; let me tell you. Your father intends that you shall go to Lisbon."

"I will not go ; my destiny is here ; my fate is fixed."



“Mauricio, does Bertha — for of course she is at the bottom of this resolution — does she return your affection?”

“I think she does, notwithstanding her shyness.”

The baroness gazed thoughtfully from the window for some moments, then, as if inspired by a sudden idea, she said, “Well, let us view this matter practically. We will suppose all opposition on your father’s part to such a marriage withdrawn, and you established at the Herdade, cosily chatting in the chimney corner, your children climbing your knees, Bertha’s sweet face opposite, and Papa Thomé and Mamma Luiza yawning impatiently for the supper hour; quite an idyllic scene, but will this satisfy your ambition while you think of others, with less ability than yourself, making for themselves a name and a career in the great world which you have given up all for love? Will no thoughts of envy and longing ever obtrude to cloud your brow and pain the heart of your gentle, but uncongenial wife, all of whose happiness will be bound up in her homely domestic interests? Think, Mauricio!”

“Perhaps you overrate my abilities; the world is not waiting to open all its doors to me.”

“There are no obstacles to a youth of talent and determination.”

“What do you propose as a profession for me?”

“We cannot decide that at a distance. Trust yourself to my guidance at first.”

“Only at first?” asked Mauricio gallantly, looking admiringly into his cousin’s beautiful face.

She blushed as she answered: “Well, well, you shall not lose your time with me; only be persuaded to come and try, Mauricio. And now to breakfast.”

Shortly after, Gabriella, passing through the hall, equipped for riding, found Mauricio waiting there to assist her into the saddle.

“Will you permit me to accompany you?” he asked, as he contemplated approvingly her handsome figure, set off by a neat riding habit.

“You have never seen my horsemanship,” said she archly. “Well, yes, you can come, on one condition.”

“Which is?”

“That you leave me when I request it; I have something to accomplish which must be done alone.”

“I will obey, however, but reluctantly,” he

replied, and giving the reins to their horses, they started off.

This exercise brought a color to Gabriella's cheeks, and a light to her eyes, Mauricio had never seen there before; it was a new revelation to him.

The baroness, with true feminine instinct, was conscious of the impression she was producing, and felt flattered and satisfied.

We know with what generous intentions she had come to Mourisca House, and she now thought if Mauricio should become enamored of her, it would be easy to make him follow her to Lisbon. And thus actuated, she not only permitted his gallantry, but even resorted to some of her admirable tactics.

Mauricio, for the first time, found himself with a proficient in all the arts of fascination, practiced, moreover, with such an absence of affectation as to seem perfectly natural. The baroness was well convinced that Mauricio's supposed passion for Bertha was an illusion, but she had wished to ascertain the nature of the young girl's sentiments, and this was her object in coming out that morning. As they drew near the Herdade, she reminded

Mauricio of his promise. He tried to evade it, but Gabriella was firm.

"And now," she added, in a tone that rejoiced the young man's heart, "I suppose you will try to catch sight of Bertha."

"Allow me to kiss your hand," he at last consented, "and I will go home and dwell upon the recollection of this memorable morning."

Gabriella rewarded his gallantry with a sweet smile, and Mauricio returned to Bacellos, his mind filled with the image of his cousin. "Poor Bertha," he sighed, "what will become of her if she knows she has a rival?"

After separating from Mauricio, the baroness turned her horse's head in the direction of the Herdade. Her road led her near a little rustic chapel, standing in the midst of a cork grove, and she could not resist the impulse to climb the hill on which it stood. The chapel, dedicated to Sta. Luzia, commanded a view of that most fertile valley, with its two or three villages embowered in orchards and gardens. A little river, bordered by laurels and willows, meandered through the valley, and on its borders, here and there, were groups of country girls singing as they washed their

clothes and spread them to dry under that bright sun.

Gabriella, fastening her horse to an old oak stump, prepared to mount to the belfry of the little chapel; but as she reached the plateau on which the building stood, she descried a girl seated on the wall, who she at once divined must be Bertha. Rejoicing at her good fortune, she approached her and said, as if in recognition, "Is not this Bertha da Pova whom I have the pleasure of meeting?"

"Yes, my lady baroness."

"Then permit me to address you as one whom I esteem."

"O, my lady!" and they greeted each other as if some sudden sympathy had drawn them together.

"I was on my way to see you," said Gabriella.

"To see me?"

"Yes; and what a happy chance brought me to this lovely spot. I suppose you often visit it?"

"Not very often. I came to-day to meet my father, who is returning from Oporto."

"Oh! he is coming; then my cousin Jorge will come, too."

"Yes; I believe he is coming," said Bertha,

with a slight hesitation not unperceived by the baroness.

"My cousin Jorge is an admirable fellow, is he not?" said Gabriella in the course of their conversation.

"He is a noble character, whom every one must respect."

"Respect — yes," said Gabriella, "but not love. I do not think girls ever care for a man who is uniformly polite and affable to all. He seems so above our level; don't you think so?"

Bertha, with her eyes fixed on a distant point, seemed too absorbed to heed the question.

"Mauricio is quite different; he has not the judgment of Jorge, but he is more lovable," the baroness went on.

Bertha roused herself from her abstraction and said, "Both of them have generous hearts, worthy of esteem."

"Certainly," continued the baroness, "but, my dear Bertha, these serious men like Jorge intimidate us; we feel if we cast a sympathetic glance upon them it may be misunderstood, so we do not look at them."

Bertha smiled.

"Have you long known this family?" the baroness asked.

"From infancy."

"Was Jorge always so sober?"

"He was always more thoughtful than children of his age."

"He is a singular fellow, and I think we ought to have him married. He would make an excellent *paterfamilias*, and I believe if a bride were chosen for him, he would accept her and be very devoted."

"I am quite sure the person to whom Snr. Jorge gave his hand, might confide in him as in a father. But you said you wanted to see me."

"O, yes! I wished to know you. Uncle Luiz talks of you with a tenderness quite unusual in him, Mauricio with the enthusiasm of a lover, and Jorge" — here Gabriella paused intentionally, to study Bertha's countenance. Coloring, she stooped to gather a flower, and the baroness continued — "in that apparently cold manner in which he speaks of everything, but in terms of high esteem. I assure you, Bertha, even in these few moments I feel that we are friends, and hope to prove it some day."

“Thank you, Sra. Baroneza.”

“Do not assume that formal tone. I do not say this out of compliment. Few people know more of your heart than I do from this brief interview.”

Bertha blushed a deep scarlet this time, and stammered, “Of my heart?”

“Do not be alarmed; I am not going to say more until we are better acquainted. Believe me when I say I feel a deep sympathy for true and generous natures who are forced to struggle against conventionalities and social prejudices. But see, there come horsemen.”

Bertha, following the direction of her eyes, exclaimed, “It is they — my father and Snr. Jorge,” and she waved her handkerchief to the travelers. Gabriella, watching her, thought, “I have discovered that poor child’s secret, and he,” — she thought, looking in the direction of the approaching men — “am I mistaken? is it reserve and not coldness? Let us see.”

Bertha, who had run to meet them, was soon in her father’s arms, but not before the baroness had seen Jorge give her one hasty glance as he greeted her with extended hand, then turned aside without further notice. The baroness was received by



him much more cordially. The party soon separated, Jorge and Bertha parting with the same appearance of constraint, but his cousin noticed that Jorge turned to look back at an angle in the road.

“And what was the result of your visit, Jorge?”

“Excellent,” he answered, in tones of real satisfaction, “our suit looks much more promising since my talk with the lawyers. I was not mistaken about the importance of that document Frei Januario allowed to grow mouldy. The information I gleaned in regard to the Land Credit encourages me to think that by its aid, I may be able to redeem our estate and pay off all debts before many years. And yet, how much is said against modern institutions,” Jorge continued in the same strain, so enthusiastically that the baroness thought to herself, “I see this absorbs him so completely there is no room for sentiment.”

It was only when near the Quinta of Bacellos that she could give the turn to the conversation she had desired. In discussing with her cousin the means of raising money, she suggested to him the idea of marrying a rich wife. Jorge exclaimed vehemently: “You counsel me to do that? To sell myself,

which would be far more shameful than the system of the old régime; in that case we were selling the estate; in this it would be selling its owner."

"That is according to circumstances. I am not talking of a marriage from merely interested motives."

"I have no leisure for love," said Jorge dryly.

"Love does not wait for an opportunity. I can not believe a heart like yours is not capable of sincere affection."

"I will not gainsay you; but I am unwilling to expose myself to having to accept the world's restrictions when I care so little for its opinion."

"Why should there be any conflict between you and the world?"

"It would be more than likely."

"That is, you feel that you would be more likely to fall in love with some country girl, brought up to labor and economy, than with any of these idle, noble cousins of yours?"

"Decidedly those would never captivate me."

"Well, let us suppose that in spite of all your precautions such a thing should happen — because, you know, we are all liable — would you break with the world?"

“I do not care to think what I should do. I might decide to sacrifice myself to others’ prejudices, that is, if I only sacrificed myself. But were I heartily in love, and beloved in return, and the woman should not have equal courage to sacrifice herself, I should not feel that I had the right to make her suffer for a belief she and hers could not share. But let us change the subject.”

The baroness acquiesced, but she had heard enough to satisfy herself.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A PROPOSAL.

BUT to return to Clemente, Anna do Védor's son. His convictions in regard to the duties pertaining to his public office conflicted with the old ideas of aristocratic immunity from all restraints of law and order. Upon finding that even the humble, down-trodden people, who suffered most from the lawlessness of those who called themselves noble, accused him of being deficient, and showing deference to the *fidalgos*, he at length concluded that nothing was left for him but to resign. This he accordingly did, to the joy and satisfaction of his mother.

"And now," she said, "is your time to marry, because, you see, that is the only way for a house to strike root. There is nothing like hearing the cry of children, and the mother singing and rocking them to sleep. You needn't laugh; it is true."

“All right, mother, but it is a serious matter; and the bride — there’s the rub.”

Anna looked her son straight in the eye. “And have you never cast your eyes around?” she asked.

Clemente shrugged his shoulders.

“You can’t deceive me,” she added. “Shall I tell you whom you have chosen? It is the very one I thought of, I am sure.”

“But I never have thought seriously.”

“Oh! no matter about that. I should like to know why Thomé’s girl would not suit?”

Clemente, somewhat taken aback, made haste to answer, “She might suit me, but you know she was brought up in a city.”

“Pray whom should she marry? The girl may thank her stars if she gets an honest man who would esteem her, and not some lazy lout.”

“But her father is doubtless ambitious for her.”

“Her father? I may as well tell you that I once touched on this matter, and I remember his answer. ‘My Bertha for a husband ought to look for an honest, industrious man, who would know how to respect her; your Clemente is the cream of the lads.’ Besides that, Thomé has an eye to business; he knows your circumstances; so pluck up

your courage and go and speak to Jorge ; you know he is ' law and gospel ' in that house ; whatever he counsels will be right."

And, following his mother's advice, shortly after this conversation Clemente sought Jorge in his working room at Bacellos.

" Shall I interrupt you ? Good-morning, Snr. Jorge."

" No, Clemente, I am only hunting for an important paper. What is the news, Clemente ? I hear you have resigned your office of Justice of the Peace."

" I should have done it long ago, for I never had anything but annoyances while I held office."

" Yes ; you may be pretty sure of encounters if you try to keep a straight path."

" Those cousins of yours of the Cruseiro " — he began.

" They are nothing but three wild boars ; you can't expect anything of them. But, tell me, how is your mother ? "

" Quite well. It was she who advised me to make this visit. The fact is, that to please her, and also because I have a leaning that way too, I have decided to " —

"To marry, eh?" said Jorge, without surprise. "It is a good resolution. Men like you make admirable heads of families. But do you come to me, a bachelor, for advice?"

"No, not exactly that; but you see I have cast my eye on some one, and I am not sure that I should be well received. I—I—have not quite the courage, and I thought perhaps you, Snr. Jorge" —

"I? You select me to play the part of match-maker!" And looking straight at Clemente, he asked, "And who is the bride?"

"The daughter of Thomé da Pova."

These words aroused Jorge. His changed manner would have betrayed him, had his visitor been less slow of comprehension.

"The daughter of Thomé da Pova!" he repeated, as if stupefied.

"Yes," returned Clemente; "Bertha, the one who was educated in Lisbon."

"I know," said Jorge impatiently; "but what made you think of Bertha?"

"Well, I had to think of some one, and it happened to be Bertha."

"Nonsense," said Jorge, and, rising from his

seat so suddenly as to startle the apathetic Clemente, he began to pace the room in great agitation.

Clemente went on. "Bertha, you know, is a good girl. She is well brought up, and has some fortune" —

"Ah!" Jorge broke in abruptly, "now I understand. You should have begun there: 'Bertha has some fortune.' You are all alike. If a girl has a few hundred dollars you all persecute her."

"O, Snr. Jorge," said Clemente, greatly agitated, "I did not think of Bertha only on account of her money; besides, I have no idea of persecuting her, and I do not think a proposal from me would dishonor her."

Jorge at once became aware that he was talking unreasonably and answered, "No, it would not; but Bertha — I do not think she would be at all suitable for you."

"Why not? Perhaps you think her too refined. I agree in that; but you see, Snr. Jorge, gentlemen about here would not have her for a wife; and, after all, I should respect her qualities; and, at any rate, I believe I could make her a good husband."

"No one denies that, Clemente. But I do not know what Thomé's views are!"



"I know Thomé would approve ; he has spoken to mother."

At these words Jorge's irritation broke forth afresh.

"Oh ! the matter is all arranged. The absurd customs of this country ! Very likely they will use persuasion with the girl, too. No, Clemente, this is not fair. I cannot approve of it."

"But, Lord preserve us, Snr. Jorge ! what an opinion you have of me. Do you suppose I am going to compel the girl to marry me ?"

"You said your mother and Thomé understood each other."

"I said they had spoken approvingly of it, but you know Thomé would never force his daughter's inclinations. I see you do not approve of my choice ; I will go and tell mother."

"No ! no ! I do not disapprove. I am your friend, and I desire your happiness. Go ahead ; try !"

"Well — but you see, Snr. Jorge, I wanted you to speak for me."

"I to speak ? Good Heavens ! What have I to do with it ? I know Thomé, but I do not know his daughter ; besides, what do I care whether she

wishes you for a husband or not! What in the name of goodness ever made you think of me?"

"It was my mother advised me."

"And why did she not go herself? Why ask outsiders?"

"You see, Snr. Jorge," said his foster brother sorrowfully, "my mother never thinks of you as an outsider."

"And she is right," said Jorge, making a great effort to control himself. "Do not mind what I have said; the fact is, I have had much to annoy me these last few days. I will speak to Thomé, but, I warn you, I will not use any influence I may have over him."

"Nor would I have you; only state my case. Say that as I feel a love" —

"Oh! do not talk of love, Clemente. You do not love her, if you did you never would have planned this all out in the cold-blooded manner you have; however, I will speak to Thomé and give you his answer," continued Jorge, as he accompanied his friend to the door.

Left to himself Jorge gave expression to his own feelings. "And I am to go and propose to Thomé to give his daughter to Clemente! There certainly

are strange experiences for me in this world. Clemente is a good lad. Bertha the wife of Clemente! I cannot associate the two together. It is monstrous — impossible. And why? Merely because I have not the courage to rise above ridiculous prejudices. If this sentiment is a genuine and powerful one, either I ought to yield to it, or else put it away entirely. But no! I could not inflict this second blow upon that poor old man; the first one was for his own benefit as well as mine, but this would be only for mine. Courage! I'll go and speak to Thomé. And Bertha — what will she say? I suppose with her good sense to appreciate Clemente's fine qualities, she will just accept him for a husband, like any other girl — she must be married, of course. No!" he burst forth, after a moment's silence, "it is useless to deny it even to myself — I do love her; she is my first, and will be my last, love, and I shall suffer — Oh! Heaven only knows how I shall suffer — to see her the wife of another. But such is my destiny. No one shall divine my secret — my fate is fixed; I will go this very day and speak to Thomé."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### A DECLARATION.

JORGE found the farmer seated at his desk.

“Ah! Snr. Jorge, you are just the man I want to see. Come here; I have something to show you. Have you had letters from Oporto?” asked Thomé.

“No,” replied Jorge, seating himself.

“Just what one may expect from lawyers. I get on much better with solicitors. Here is one from mine,” passing the letter to Jorge. He read it with great satisfaction. The suit was likely to turn in his favor.

“What do you say to this?” asked the farmer.

“It is indeed good news; but I have come upon a different errand; a serious matter brings me here.”

“A serious matter, hey? I hope it may be some pleasant message from your father. Well, say on.”

“I will tell you at once that Clemente, Anna do Védor’s son, requested me to negotiate an important matter between you and him.”

“Why could not the fellow come himself?”

“The affair is of a delicate nature, you see; in short, I am empowered to ask Bertha’s hand for Clemente.”

Jorge pronounced these last words with considerable effort.

“Indeed?” said Thomé, evincing little surprise. “He might have dispensed with all this ceremony. Well, I have no objection; Clemente is a young man of good principles, has been brought up to work, and has a little something of his own as well. He knows how to give things their proper value, too. He would see that Bertha is different from the generality of girls around here, and appreciate her accordingly, I believe; don’t you think so, Snr. Jorge?”

“Yes,” returned Jorge, going to the window, and beginning to drum with his fingers upon the panes. “I ought, no doubt, to consider myself happy in aiding you to secure so desirable a son-in-law.”

“Not so fast, Snr. Jorge; I may like him well enough, but Bertha is the one to decide.”

"Very true ; but she, of course, will readily perceive the excellencies of Clemente. Consult her, please, and let me know her decision."

"But you are not going, Snr. Jorge?"

"Did you not say you were going to consult Bertha?"

"Yes ; but do you mind waiting and hearing the answer from Bertha's own lips?"

"I!" exclaimed Jorge, with a vehemence wholly inexplicable to Thomé.

"Yes; why not? There is no secret in the matter. Besides, you might be able to give her some information about Clemente, whom she scarcely knows."

"Confound it, Thomé!" said Jorge angrily. "What possible interest have I whether Bertha accepts Clemente or not? I do not wish to assume any responsibility."

"Why, I thought you said he was your friend," returned Thomé, greatly astonished at Jorge's testiness ; "that would be sufficient guarantee to my daughter."

"All the more reason to be on my guard."

"I don't wish you to give her any advice, but merely to say, 'I undertook this mission, because

I believe Clemente to be an honest man ' ; however, if you dislike " —

" Oh ! I have no objection, if you decidedly wish it," interrupted Jorge, in whose mind a struggle had been going on between his repugnance to Thomé's proposition, and a morbid curiosity to hear how Bertha would receive the proposal. He at once seated himself at the table, and with tremulous hand took up a book. Hearing Bertha's step in answer to her father's summons, he raised his eyes to return her salutation, and then resumed his reading.

" I sent for you, Bertha," explained her father, " in relation to a serious matter which has reference to you."

" To me ? " said Bertha, looking first at her father and then at Jorge, who kept his eyes upon his book.

" Yes ; there is nothing alarming ; an honest, industrious young man asks you for a wife."

Jorge ventured a furtive glance at Bertha, whose face changed from scarlet to ashen whiteness.

" This young man is Clemente, the son of Anna do Védor, a friend of yours. Now decide ; but " —

Bertha remained silent, and her father went on :

"Snr. Jorge was kind enough to bring the proposal for Clemente, as he had not the courage himself."

Bertha glanced at Jorge, with an expression of deep pain, but he did not see it, and turning to her father, she asked, "And what answer did you return to Snr. Jorge for Clemente?"

"I, for my part, have no objection; but you are the one to decide whether you like him for a husband."

His daughter lowered her eyes, and then fixing them full upon Jorge, as if to penetrate his inmost thought, said, "As Snr. Jorge undertook this proposal, I think I have the right to ask his opinion of it."

"My opinion?" said Jorge uneasily.

"Yes; you are my father's friend, and I trust mine also. You would not have undertaken this mission if you had thought it would bring me unhappiness."

"I simply fulfill the mission given me; I offer no advice. Clemente is a good fellow, who will make a woman happy, if she does not aspire to more than the loyal esteem of an honest man; but nowadays women have their heads so full of romance that they are more pleased with an idle,



empty-headed fellow who can make soft speeches" — and then checking himself, as he observed Thomé's surprise, he said — "but as you are not of this kind, I should think Clemente would make you a good husband."

"Bertha," said her father, "you must take time to consider."

"It is unnecessary, father; you may send word to Clemente that I accept him."

Jorge felt a great blackness pass before his eyes.

"Do not be hasty, my child," said her father.

"I am resolved," said Bertha with firmness. "They say Clemente has a generous heart, and I am sure would not wound me when I did not deserve it. It is easy to avoid offending a girl like me," and saying this she looked straight at Jorge. "Father, you can send and tell Clemente that I accept him."

"Well, let me consult a little with your mother," and Thomé left the room.

The two left behind remained in silence for some moments. Bertha was the first to break it.

"I ought to thank you, Snr. Jorge, for the interest you feel in my happiness."

Jorge raised his eyes to Bertha's face and read

there the effort she was making to control her inward agitation.

"I trust you are not influenced by the part I have taken in the matter. I would not have you sacrifice your happiness."

"Oh! certainly not. I am — I shall be — happy," said poor Bertha, covering her face and bursting into tears she could no longer control.

Jorge drew near compassionately.

"Why do you weep, Bertha? Do not sacrifice yourself."

Instead of answering, Bertha raised her tearful eyes to Jorge, saying, "Will the hatred you bear me be extinguished by this sacrifice?"

"Hatred? What do you mean, Bertha?"

"You cannot deny it; it was only too evident in your cruel words. Why are you so severe towards me, when you are so indulgent towards others? My education! God knows if I was ever led away by it. How have I shown the faults of my education? Speak, Snr. Jorge; tell me why you dislike me so — what bad qualities have you seen in me that make you treat me as you do?"

She was much moved as she uttered these words, and dropped into a chair.

Jorge, no less moved, arose and seated himself beside her. Taking her hands in his, he said gently, "I am going to be loyal and frank with you, as you desire, Bertha. You shall hear the cause of all my strange proceeding. Look at me, that you may see how sincere is my confession." She raised her eyes, and he, with a fervent pressure of the hands he still held in his, continued, "I love you, Bertha!"

The girl started, withdrew her hands, and covered her face as if to repress a cry of amazement.

"You must listen to me, Bertha; reserved persons like myself, if they once begin a confession, must make a clean breast of it. I love you, and have loved you even before you returned to your home. I used to hear your father speak of you, and listened to your letters, and this love grew in the midst of all my cares and preoccupations. I strove to conquer it, and was angry at my failure; and, unreasonable as it was, angry even with you. I was jealous of my brother, believing that you preferred him, although I knew that with all his brilliant qualities he would never love you as I do. And then, Bertha—I must speak frankly—I shrank from inflicting this deep wound to my

father's pride — this outrage upon his prejudices; and rather than purchase my happiness at such a price, I resolved to sacrifice it by repelling you to the verge of dislike, lest should I find on giving way to my passion, that you returned it, my courage fail me. It was on this account that I accepted this mission. God only knows what it has cost me. Now judge and pardon me," passing his hand wearily across his brow.

It was Bertha who broke the silence which followed. Laying her hand on his, and looking earnestly at him, she answered, "Your generous confession inspires me with courage. Look at me, Jorge; trusting to your loyal nature, I acknowledge without reserve that I also love you."

He lifted his face for a moment, radiant with joy.

"Yes," she continued; "but I, too, comprehend the necessity for this sacrifice, and am the last to dissuade you from it. The thought that I am suffering with you will give you courage. I venerate and esteem your father, Jorge, as if he were my own, and to spare him pain I am ready for any sacrifice, especially since I know that you do not despise me; that was my torture. Now, I feel myself happy and brave; I can face my duty and

future calmly. I can accept, without remorse, Clemente's proposal, for I shall tell him frankly that I will be a faithful wife, although I do not love him."

"Do not, Bertha, if you really love me."

"Why not? Believe me, this is the surest way of putting an end to this fatal passion of ours. We both firmly believe in duty, and that will inspire us."

"Bertha, tell me once more that you love me; say that you are not deceiving yourself, and I will overcome every obstacle, as I have done, to save my house from ruin."

"What are you saying? How could I be happy, bringing discord into the family? Reflect, I am the daughter of Thomé da Povoá, a former servant at Mourisca House, a service from whom Don Luiz regards as a humiliation and insult. Your father esteems me, it is true. A short time since he even gave me his blessing, as if I were his daughter. I will not forfeit his regard. And you, Jorge, will always esteem me, I trust."

"I shall worship you, Bertha," said Jorge, taking her hand and kissing it passionately. "Bertha, Bertha! are we not committing a crime almost, in this?"

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"No, Jorge. It is a duty ; most painful, but we must meet it."

The voices of Thomé and Luiza were heard.

Jorge rose hastily.

"I cannot listen to all they will have to say ; good-by. Remember, if your courage fail, all can be remedied."

"Good-by, Jorge ; we will help each other."

Bertha received her parents with dried eyes, although still agitated. Luiza did not seem over-pleased with the marriage prospect.

"Is this true, Bertha — do you really like him ?" she asked in doubtful tones.

"Yes, mother ; I think I ought to accept him."

"And Snr. Jorge, did he advise it, too ?"

"Yes," said Bertha, in some confusion.

"Has he gone ?" asked her father, looking round the room.

"Yes ; he said he could not wait, and I am going to ask leave to retire to my room."

"Well," said Luiza, looking after her daughter, "this certainly is not what I expected."

"What did you expect ?" asked her husband ; "some prince, perhaps, to ask her hand ?"

"I know what I thought !"

“And I know, too. No one could remove the cobwebs you had in your head; but you are undeceived now.”

Luiza sighed, and thought to herself, “Her face is not that of a happy bride; I only wish I could have seen his. But I suppose it must be as God wills!”

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### NEW DEPARTURES.

MAURICIO'S fancy for his cousin still continued. Never had he been known to be such a stay-at-home; he seldom left the house, unless Gabriella accompanied him. The baroness, woman of the world as she was, thoroughly understood the character of her cousin, and feared the effect upon him of idle life at Bacellos, even though she was conscious she had by no means exhausted all her powers of fascination.

She decided to return to Lisbon, convinced that he would follow her. But how leave her poor old uncle, who had become more and more dependent upon her for sympathy and amusement? Whenever she alluded to her departure, he invariably changed the subject, so she had gone on postponing it. One morning she went to Jorge's room, where she found him wearily laboring over his books.



"You must be careful, Jorge; remember your constitution is not strong," the baroness cautioned.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because your face tells me you require more air and exercise; you look exhausted."

"Oh! only the effect of a bad night."

"Well, now close your books and listen to me."

"I am at your service," said Jorge, obeying her.

"I have resolved to leave to-morrow morning for Lisbon."

"What means this haste?"

"I must go. You know something must be done about Mauricio; he is being ruined here."

"Well, let him go alone."

"But he will not."

"Why?"

"I know he will not; besides, I must prepare the way."

"But my father."

"Ah! there is the difficulty; and it is for that I come to you. Uncle Luiz is really ill, physically and mentally; he requires a woman's thoughtfulness and care."

"And yet you say you are going to leave him to-morrow."

“Because I have thought of a plan. No one is better fitted to take my place than his goddaughter Bertha.”

Jorge arose from his seat. “That is impossible,” he said emphatically.

“And why?”

“Because — because it is.”

“Please give me a more logical reason than that.”

“My father would not accept the services of Thomé’s daughter.”

“You must remember that your father has changed since he left Mourisca House, and Bertha seems to him the living image of his daughter Beatrice.”

“Thomé would never consent; and besides, they are preparing for the wedding.”

“What wedding?” cried Gabriella in amazement.

“Bertha’s with Clemente, the son of my nurse, Anna do Vêdor.”

Gabriella was silent for some time. She was striving to divine Jorge’s thoughts.

“Is Bertha willing?”

“Assuredly. Who would compel her?”

"It seems incredible to me ; what do you think of it, Jorge ? "

"It is so natural a thing, that I made the proposal to her father."

"But how came you to think of such a thing? "

"Clemente asked me to do it."

Jorge replied to all these questions in a constrained voice, not once looking at his cousin, who was, however, watching him narrowly.

"Now, Jorge," she said, "look straight at me and say whether you view this marriage of Bertha's with the indifference you pretend to? "

He colored deeply. "Not exactly with indifference ; you know I am a friend of Thomé's — and Bertha" —

"Is his daughter ; we know all about that. Now just answer frankly, are you not in love with Bertha? "

"I? "

"You need not deny it with your lips, for your face betrays you."

"If that is the case, I may as well confess that I do love her."

"Then what means all this farce? "

"It means that Bertha and I are determined

courageously to fulfill our duty — she in making happy a good honest man, and I in devoting myself to the task I have undertaken, and to render my father's last days tranquil."

"I must be behind the times, for I have always held, and do still hold, that people who love each other sincerely should surmount all obstacles. I am inclined to think, Jorge, that there is a little aristocratic vanity left in you, after all."

"Not that I am aware of; but I must respect my father's prejudices."

"I cannot see why there should not be a compromise, and I thought you said only the other day, that you felt you had no right to sacrifice another."

"But she is as courageously determined as I am."

"Truly one finds rare plants in the country. I would not have believed in such generosity. I see, of course, after learning of these heroic resolves of yours, why you are opposed to Bertha's coming. I am sorry indeed, because it was a pet project of mine."

The baroness retired. She was apparently dissuaded from her project, but upon reaching her

room, she seated herself at her desk and wrote the following note :

MY DEAR SNR. THOMÉ DA POVOA :

I am obliged to start to-day for Lisbon. I leave my Uncle quite ill and very sorrowful at my loss, for indeed only a woman can minister properly to one of his age and disposition. Knowing the kind of vengeance you seek against my Uncle, I thought it but right to inform you of these circumstances, leaving you to draw your own conclusions.

With much esteem, I remain yours, etc.,

GABRIELLA.

“ A word to the wise sufficeth,” said she, folding the letter and sealing it. “ My cousin Jorge must have patience ; now happen what may, I wash my hands of it all.”

Only to Jorge did the baroness mention her intentions until, her preparation completed, on the eve of her departure, she sought an interview with her uncle and succeeded, after much opposition on his part, in persuading him that her presence was required in Lisbon ; and having promised to return as soon as possible, obtained at length his reluctant consent.

The next morning while awaiting impatiently her accustomed visit, the old fidalgo was surprised by the entrance of Frei Januario, who, to his

amazement, informed him that the baroness had left at an early hour, at the same time presenting a letter, which she had commissioned him to deliver.

“How! gone without bidding me farewell!”

“Well, what can you expect? It all comes of Freemasonry and these senseless modern ideas.”

Opening the letter the old man read :

Pardon, dear Uncle, my sudden departure. I had not the courage to pain you by a formal leave-taking. You will see me again, but it will be better for our plans that Mauricio should be in Lisbon whilst I am there, and I have told him so, trusting that you will not withhold your approval. I have a presentiment that Providence will provide some one to supply my place to you. Grant me always your friendship, and believe me your affectionate and grateful niece,

GABRIELLA.

Don Luiz read the letter through twice, and then bidding Frei Januario to leave him, the solitary old man refused all other services that were offered him that morning. About noon, when the baroness usually came to his room with jelly and a glass of wine, he heard the door gently open; with his back to it he called out in some agitation, “Who is there?”

No answer; but he heard a woman’s light foot-

step, and before he could turn, Bertha stood before him.

"You here, Bertha?" he exclaimed, attempting to rise.

"This would have been my place long since, had I not known that you were in no want of tender care."

"And have you come to stay?"

"If you wish it."

"But what will your father say?"

Bertha turned her eyes in the direction of the door, and involuntarily Don Luiz's glance followed hers. It was as if he had received an electric shock when he perceived the farmer, but in a gentle voice he said, "You there, Thomé da Pova?"

"Yes, sir; I accompanied my daughter," and advancing a few steps, and turning his hat in his hands, he continued, "and if you will do the favor to accept of her company she will remain with much pleasure. There is nothing like a woman's care when one is ailing."

"But, Thomé," said the noble, uneasy at accepting a favor from the farmer, "I know how precious a daughter is; I cannot accept this sacrifice."

“Oh! you know, Fidalgo, that it is as well I should learn to do without her; girls sooner or later leave the paternal nest; so you need have no scruples; besides I have others at home.”

Don Luiz felt that he must yield with a good grace this time, to Thomé’s generosity.

“I do not hesitate to contract debts of this nature, Thomé; I accept.”

“That is right,” exclaimed Thomé; “then I shall leave her with you and go about my business,” and with a bow he was about to retire, when Don Luiz called out, “Not without a hand-shake; it is the only way I have to pay this debt.”

“With all my heart, Fidalgo.” And the honest farmer approaching the bedside and taking the thin, aristocratic hand of the Lord of Casa Mourisca in his firm grasp, exclaimed in the exuberance of feeling, “You may rest assured it is the hand of a friend.”

As Bertha moved about the apartment, falling with a woman’s delicate tact into his accustomed ways, the old lord followed her with his eyes with evident satisfaction.

“By the by, Bertha,” he remarked, “I must order Gabriella’s room to be prepared for you.”



"Do not trouble yourself; the baroness has already done that."

"How did she know?"

"It was she who sent to tell me she was going, and that I might be of use."

"Oh!" said Don Luiz, "now I understand her letter. She is a good girl, after all!" His voice had an unusual softness as he spoke, and there was a smile on his lips. Their talk was interrupted by a knock.

"Who is there?" called Don Luiz, almost angrily.

"*Licet?*" murmured the padre, from the outside.

"What do you want?" said his patron, still more annoyed when learning who the intruder was.

"Your sons, Snrs. D. Jorge and Mauricio, ask permission to speak to you."

"What do they wish?"

"That I cannot tell you."

"I cannot see them now," he answered drily, but reading in Bertha's countenance the disapproval she could not conceal, he called to the padre who was about to retire,

"I should like to know what it is they want?"

Bertha, who was smoothing her godfather's pillow, said playfully :

"The best way of knowing would be to hear what they have to say."

"Well, tell them to come in."

Jorge and Mauricio soon entered, with the air of respect which the presence of their father always inspired. Bertha felt her heart beat violently at thus meeting Jorge after their last parting. She noticed how pale and worn he looked.

The brothers were prepared for Bertha's presence there. Mauricio, whose rising passion for his cousin had been stimulated by her sudden departure and an insinuating little billet she left for him, met Bertha with calmness. He was the first to speak.

"My departure for Lisbon has been long talked of. Cousin Gabriella went this morning and left a note bidding me to follow; I come to ask your permission to leave to-day."

"You may go! Speak to Frei Januario about the money necessary." And the father's glance turned upon Jorge inquiringly.

He approached with a roll of papers.

"I would like you to examine these papers I have prepared."

"What for? Why should I trouble myself with

anything of the sort. You know I always leave every thing to my agent."

"If you authorize me as such, I will trouble you no further."

The father felt a momentary anger on perceiving that in spite of his orders to Frei Januario he had again been deceived; and yet secretly he was glad.

"Do what you like; the future is for you, not for me."

Jorge laid before him a series of documents to be signed.

Don Luiz made a sign of disgust, but Bertha noticing his eyes searching the room, brought him materials for writing, and the fidalgo, with the most aristocratic indifference, without even a glance at the contents, signed them all.

"And now," said Jorge, "I ask your permission to absent myself for some days, to visit our more distant possessions."

"You may go," said his father in the same tone he had used before.

His two sons bent respectfully before him to receive his blessing, and each in turn reverently kissed his hand. As they reached the door Don

Luiz called, "Mauricio, you are going into a new world ; be worthy of the name you bear."

"I shall always have your example before me, father, and I hope never to swerve from the path of honor."

"It may not lead you to happiness," murmured the old man. "And, Jorge, I rely upon your judgment to be prudent in the use of authority with which you are entrusted. In your efforts to restore our house, do nothing to tarnish its honor." As they departed he said to Bertha, "And we are left alone."

"They will soon be back," she said. But he made a sign as if he had no faith in the future.

"Bertha," he said presently, "perhaps you had better go and see that every thing is right for them ; I have not much faith in Frei Januario."

Bertha hastened to do his bidding. She found the brothers in the dining-room, and was able to assist in their preparations.

"Bertha," said Mauricio in parting, "are you sufficiently generous to pardon me all my follies toward you ?"

"In order to pardon one must have condemned. I never blamed you."

And this time Mauricio pressed her hand in genuine friendship.

“Are you going very far, Snr. Jorge?” Bertha asked, when they were left alone for a few moments.

“Only to Mourisca House; but I could not tell my father that.”

“And you go because I have come?”

“Perhaps so. Am I not right?”

“You may be; but forgive me for obliging you to do this.”

“I thank you, Bertha; you will be the salvation of my father.”

“Then we separate as friends,” said the young girl, extending her hand.

“As always,” answered Jorge, raising it to his lips with more fervor than was consistent with the resolution to stifle this love in his bosom.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A CONFESSION.

UNDER the influence of Bertha's thoughtful and unwearying attention, Don Luiz rapidly rallied to new life and interest, and the hours which had lingered so drearily now passed quickly and pleasantly, as she sang and played to him on Beatrice's harp or read aloud from his favorite authors. One morning early as was her wont, she had gone to the garden to gather a fresh bouquet for her godfather. In her wanderings she approached the entrance gate, and was aware that some one stood without. It was Clemente. Bertha started; it was the first time she had met him since she had accepted his proposal. Summoning all her courage she greeted him with a cordial invitation to enter.

In much confusion he stammered out, "No, Miss — I happened to be passing — it is true I wish to speak to you, but it will be another time."

“And why not now?” asked Bertha, opening the gate; “I also have something to say to you.”

“In that case, here I am to hear it, Bertha.”

“Let us sit down,” she suggested.

Clemente timidly took his place beside her.

“You have been informed, Snr. Clemente, that I accepted your proposal made to my father through Snr. Jorge?”

“Yes, Bertha; they told me, much to my joy. But does the answer come from your heart?”

“Snr. Clemente, I am going to be frank and loyal to you. Even if I should say that it was my heart which dictated my consent, you would not believe it, for we scarcely know each other. I am going to tell you the truth frankly, which you have a right to know.” She paused a moment, with crimsoned cheek; then in a firm voice proceeded: “There was in my heart another affection, the first and the last of that nature — of which I am not ashamed; but it could not live; it was a great tree which had struck root in a little flower-pot — it must die. But although I cannot love you, I can, if you care for it, render you a wife’s loyal friendship and duty.”

“Is the man living?” stammered Clemente.

"Yes," replied Bertha without hesitation, "and he loves me, but he too feels the necessity of self-conquest, and he will do it. But now if after my confession you have any doubt, I beg you to withdraw from your proposal while there is yet time."

"Understand me, Bertha ; if I decided to make you my wife, notwithstanding your confession, or rather on account of it, I would swear to you that I should no more doubt you than myself ; but that is not what I am thinking about at present. If that man is alive, why should you lose all hope, and put an end to what might be ? "

"It is impossible, Snr. Clemente."

"Will you be hurt if I beg time to reflect ? " he asked.

"Not at all. It was on that account I spoke."

And Clemente went his way, thinking : "The upshot of the matter is, that she loves another, and why should I come between ? She says it is impossible, but — I'll go and consult mother ; after all, though, she knows no more than I. No — I'll go to Snr. Jorge ; he is now at Casa Mourisca, for he took the road thither."

Jorge had shut himself up in the somber old palace, with only the gardener for company. Upon



learning that Jorge was to leave Bacellos, he insisted upon accompanying him. Jorge had devoted himself more assiduously than ever to his occupation, but the bitterness of these days passed in the deserted, melancholy apartments, had told upon him to such a degree that Clemente started when he saw him.

“Have you been ill, Snr. Jorge?”

“No; do I look so?”

“Do not work so hard, I beg you.”

“This is not work. But what brings you here?”

“I have come to consult you upon the same matter.”

Jorge made an impatient movement.

“I thought that was all decided; you need not consult me about the trousseau.”

“It is not that;” and Clemente related what had passed between him and Bertha.

It was difficult for Jorge to conceal his emotion during the recital; at the close he said, “What do you wish me to say?”

“I only wanted to ask if you knew of this love?”

Jorge gave a great start, and with heightened

color looked hard at his interlocutor. "What should I know of that love?"

Clemente in some surprise said, "You are so intimate with Thom , I thought you might know."

"My relations with the father have nothing to do with the girl. It rests with you to decide whether, after her confession, you will take her as a wife."

"That is the very thing — I want to know why it is impossible that Bertha should marry this man, as she says it is. It may not always be so, and how should I feel if I knew that I had been in the way."

"You may be at rest on that point, Clemente; the obstacles that exist to-day will always exist," said Jorge inadvertently.

"And do you know them?" asked Clemente, in much surprise.

"No; but if Bertha assured you, you should rely upon her word; she does not speak without reflection. That love was likely a girlish fancy, which the serious duties of life will put an end to."

"Well, I'll go and see what my mother says," said Clemente, after a few moments' silence.

“And what right have you to speak to your mother about what Bertha has confided to you?” asked Jorge with such vehemence as to cause Clemente to start.

“I think I may confide to my mother what I have to you.”

“Well, you are right there. Do what you please, and follow the dictates of your conscience.”

Poor Clemente went forth more thoughtful than before.

Jorge’s manner toward him was so inexplicable; and then that last suggestion, that he ought not to consult his mother.

Anna do Védor noticed her son’s depression, and thinking that it was owing to the delay of the marriage, she decided to speak to Thomé.

In the meantime letters had been received from the baroness and Mauricio. To Jorge she wrote thus: “You would be surprised to see how quickly your brother has transformed himself into a man of fashion; and there are many envious of his *aplomb* and *savoir faire*. The minister of foreign affairs gives me every hope of his being made attaché to some foreign legation, which seems to me the very thing for a man of his tastes and gifts.”

This information was received with much pleasure by Jorge and his father, the latter recalling his own younger days, when he trod the same path.

Later on she wrote: "I believe he might be made Minister of the Navy, which in Portugal is not so difficult of attainment. To one of his imagination there is much that is attractive, connected as it seems with our past glories."

In this letter Gabriella alluded to a probability of her marriage to Mauricio.

Do not think this a mere caprice; I only resolved after mature consideration. Sooner or later I must have yielded to one of the many aspirants to my hand—or to my fortune, perhaps—and my sympathy for Mauricio was sufficient cause for my preference. He is an amiable fellow, and sufficiently refined to give me no cause to repent the step; that is all I ask. For him I cannot but think it will be an advantage from a financial point of view, and it will prevent his espousing the first pretty girl he might fall in love with.

I am sure you will agree that there are but few women who would accept Mauricio more likely to be happy with him, and make him happy. So any day you may expect us there to ask Don Luiz's sanction. In the meantime plead our cause with him.

P. S. Is Bertha still at Bacellos? I hope she will stay on. It will never be too late for that marriage; I cannot bear the idea of it.

Jorge was greatly surprised by Gabriella's communication. Notwithstanding a certain light tone

in the letter he felt that his cousin had given the matter thought and reflection, and for Mauricio it was a good thing.

A few weeks later Don Luiz received a letter asking for his sanction, which he at once prepared to give with the greatest satisfaction.

"Come here," he said to Bertha, who found him at his desk. "Do you know what I am doing?"

"Writing to your son Mauricio, perhaps?"

"Yes; to Mauricio and Gabriella. Do you know what about?"

"No."

"I am authorizing a marriage."

"Snr. Mauricio's! and do I know the bride?"

"Yes."

"Then it must be the baroness. What a happiness for him."

"Yes, so I say; if there is any one runs a risk it is the bride."

"Snr. Mauricio has a good heart."

Bertha considered this a good time to carry out a project she had for some days been revolving in her own mind. Approaching Don Luiz's chair she said, "As you seem to be in the mood for granting requests I am going to make one."

"And what is it, Bertha?"

"It is of the same nature as your son's."

"A marriage? Whose, Bertha?"

"Whose should it be but my own?" said she, in a melancholy tone of voice she could not conceal.

"You going to marry! And whom, may I ask?"

"The son of Anna do Védor — Clemente."

Don Luiz started. Striking the desk heavily with his hand, he exclaimed, "What, Bertha! don't be quizzing me."

"I am speaking seriously. I ask your consent."

"You marry Clemente? Why, it is the most preposterous thing I ever heard of! Who ever thought of such a thing?"

"Clemente asked my father."

"And he consented! Just like Thomé! But you, Bertha?"

"Clemente is a good honest fellow."

"Oh! don't talk to me about 'a good honest fellow.' A girl like you to sacrifice yourself! No, Bertha, Clemente cannot be your husband."

"Your great kindness blinds you, my dear god-father. What sort of a husband could I aspire to?"

"You? Well, in this country of savages, I do

not know of any one worthy of you. But what is the necessity of marrying?"

"I will tell you," said Bertha frankly. "The education my father gave me has never deceived me. I felt that I was to follow the example of my mother and fulfill a woman's mission in endeavoring to make life easier for some honest, industrious man."

"But, Bertha, it is not only working men who require that support and consolation. I do not believe that you love Clemente, and yet you say you are going to fulfill your mission in this world by devoting yourself to him. And you leave me, who have been abandoned by my sons. You have made me look upon you as a second Beatrice, and could you expect me to give a daughter of mine to Clemente? Ah! well, I see you grow weary of the company of an old man. I ought not to hinder you. Go, if you wish."

"If I really can be a consolation and comfort to you, my dear godfather, you have only to tell me to remain. Most gladly will I devote myself to you, feeling that I am fulfilling a mission Beatrice left me."

The old man placed his hands on her head as she

knelt before him, and, stooping, kissed her tenderly on the forehead.

“Thank you, Bertha ; your words are like balm to my wounded spirit. My life cannot last much longer ; your sacrifice will not be very long ; but, even so, I would not have you make any promises. I only ask for time to reflect upon your petition.”

“Oh ! do not think any more about that marriage ; had I known I would not have spoken.”

“It was better you did. I must think about it.”

“And now, sir, let us go to the garden awhile.”

The result of this conversation was that the marriage was indefinitely postponed. Thomé informed Anna, who made some sharp allusion to the egotism of the fidalgo, who, after offending the father, knew how to appropriate the services of the daughter. And yet Anna would have been the first to counsel Bertha to remain, so much did she commiserate the state to which the old man had been reduced.



## CHAPTER XXV.

ANNA DO VÉDOR.

CLEMENTE could not forget the unusual and almost defiant manner in which Jorge had spoken both times he had consulted him about his marriage; so different from his usual calm manner. He brooded over it by day and by night.

“Who can the fellow be? and why should she not marry him?” he asked himself.

At last one night he started up in bed and exclaimed as he struck his hand on the pillow, “I have it—it is Jorge! Why didn’t I ever think of it before? Of course it must be; but why should it be impossible? Oh! the old man—he may die—it is true Jorge may have his own ideas.” And thus meditating he turned and tossed on his bed until dawn, when he dressed and went out, and paced to and fro under his mother’s window.

“What has got into you, boy, that you are stir-

ring round at this hour?" called Anna from her window.

"I rose a little earlier and came out for a walk."

"Nonsense! I heard you thrashing around all the blessed night. It is nothing, I believe, but all this bother about the marriage!"

"Please step out here, mother, and let us have a talk." And he led the somewhat bewildered Anna to a seat under the vine trellis.

"Be quick, lad, for I have a great deal to do this morning. I am sure you are going to talk about the wedding."

"Yes; of the wedding which will never be."

"Never be! And why not, pray?"

"Because I have thought better of it."

"Oh! go along with you. I am not to be frightened by this talk."

"Listen to me, mother. Bertha, it is true, accepted me, but she does not care for me; she likes some one else better."

"What a fool of a girl!"

"To like some one else better than your son?"

"No; it is not. But it is probably some Lisbon puppy. So she told you to your face that she did not like you?"

"She told me that she had loved, but that she had done everything to overcome the passion; and, if knowing this, I were willing to marry her, she would make me a faithful wife."

"Much obliged for her condescension. As if you were dying for her beautiful eyes! Such affected creatures as girls are nowadays. Thomé is the one to blame."

"Mother, I wish I had not told you, if this is the way you are going to talk."

"Of course you told her you could get along very well without her?"

"No; I only said I should take time to consider. You see I wanted to find out who the fellow was, and I puzzled my head over it, until last night I guessed who it was."

"Some city dandy?"

"No; it is a serious matter. Shall I tell you — it is — Jorge."

Anna do Védor put her hand on her son's shoulder. "And you expect me to believe this?" she said.

"Indeed it is true."

"Did the foolish girl think" —

"She didn't think anything about it," Clemente

interrupted. "She liked him, and I believe Jorge cares even more for her. What I fear is that it will be the death of him. If you could see how dreadfully he looks!"

"How did you come to know all this?"

Clemente related all the circumstances to his mother, and she at once, with her great love for Jorge, exclaimed, "If he likes her why should he not marry her?"

"But his father?"

"I know the old man is as stubborn as an ox. How the devil does lay his snares, to be sure. To think that Jorge, who never really looked at a girl, should fall in love with just this one! Why, his father would burst with passion to see Thomé father-in-law to one of his sons. I only wish I could meet Jorge, to ask him if this really is true?"

"Oh! pray don't; you don't know Jorge."

"I don't know him! That is a good joke. I tell you, the mouth was made to talk with, and do you think if I saw Jorge suffering, I would not have the courage to speak to the old fidalgo? I tell you once when his poor wife was dying, because he did not allow her to receive letters from

her brother, I just went to him and said, ‘I tell you, sir, you are preparing a life of remorse for yourself, if you let your lady pine away in this fashion with her heart full of longing affection.’ And do you think he was angry? Not a bit of it! he never said a word, but from that time his wife received letters regularly, and you know how the gardener came and remained?”

“Well — yes, but this is very different.”

“But, then, he is much more broken now. At any rate, I am going off to Thomé.”

“Not a word of this to him.”

“Have you lost your head entirely? You decide to break off an engagement, and then not a word must be said to the father — and Thomé is just the man to be trifled with!”

“I meant to say you must not mention Jorge.”

“Let me alone. I am not a woman of plans; when the words come into my head I just let them drop out. But Jorge — Jorge! — and the girl! if she should catch him. She is a good little thing, after all, even if she did not like you. I always said Thomé was born on a bellows,” she concluded as she went in to breakfast followed by Clemente, after which she left the house.

Half-way to the Herdade, in opening a wicket gate leading into a path across the fields, Anna came suddenly upon the very person she had wished to see. "Oh! oh!" she exclaimed, "you look just like a ghost. They told me so, but I never thought it was as bad as this."

"What did they tell you?" asked Jorge.

"They told me you were just like all the rest, and that for youthful follies you looked yellow, and as if you had one foot in the grave."

"And do you believe it now?"

"I tell you what, Jorge, if you wish to follow your sister, you had better go on as you are."

"What would you have me do? It is not in our hands to grow fat or lean."

"But you ought not to go on suffering until you burst!"

"I don't know what you mean, Anna."

"Well, if I must speak more plainly, I would like to ask you if it was a nice thing to palm off upon my Clemente a bride the young fidalgo of Casa Mourisca had rejected?"

The deep crimson which flushed Jorge's face, and the indignant glance he turned upon Anna, almost made her repent her words.

"Nurse," he said, "I see you are acquainted with a secret I desired might forever remain concealed. I will not ask you how you learned it. I do not deny it, but I will say that Clemente has no idea of what it cost me to help him in his suit."

"And who asked you to make that sacrifice? Clemente could not see what was in your heart; do you think he is the man to accept such a sacrifice? As soon as he knew it"—

"Knew it—knew what?"

"Knew that Snr. Jorge of Casa Mourisca loves the daughter of Thomé da Povia, and that the daughter of Thomé da Herdade likes Snr. Jorge. My son is too right-minded to seek to separate two hearts that are breaking for each other."

"Does not Clemente know that that love is condemned to death, and it will not be his refusal that will save it? He said if he found that her dreams could not be realized he would take her."

"Why not realized? In the name of common sense, what is there impossible in a marriage between Snr. Jorge and Bertha da Povia?"

Jorge shrugged his shoulders and gave a melancholy smile. Anna misinterpreted the smile and proceeded with more acrimony.

“That is just as I thought; the scruples come when you please. A poor man has a daughter he wishes to give to an honest, industrious man, and here comes a young fidalgo who makes grimaces at her, and spins cobwebs in her head, and she, poor little thing, gets caught in the net, and then my fine gentleman begins to think of the impossible, and very kindly passes her off on an honest youth who has a great regard for her; and then he finds she cannot give him her heart, because the other has it. Pray what is the use of a wife without a heart?”

Jorge grew more and more thoughtful as his interrogator proceeded. He could not but acknowledge the justice of some of her words, and for the first time he was conscious of a feeling of remorse.

“You are right in part, Nurse; but no one knows how I struggled against it. And she would never have known it, but for a moment of desperation, when she accused me of hatred towards her; then it was I told her all, and asked her what I should do? We both formed the resolution to put it aside forever. Do not suppose me capable of such low motives as you charged me with. I believe Bertha would have made your son a good and faithful wife; I know that pure soul. But if I acted un-



wisely, Clemente must forgive me; I certainly meant no offense."

Anna felt herself growing very weak. To conceal her emotion, she said, "Oh! plague take it! Who speaks of offense, you foolish boy. Don't you know that what makes me angry is to see you wasting away in this manner, all for these ridiculous notions? I am going myself to the fidalgo."

"Oh! Nurse, I beseech you, do not do such a thing."

"Well, then, you must put on another face if you do not wish me to follow my own counsel."

Anna looked after him as he walked away. "I remember that child," she murmured, "how if his father or mother scolded him, he would never cry or say a word, but I always knew we should have him ill in a week; and now he is capable of letting himself die of this passion, but that he shall not if I can help it."

She arrived at the Herdade just as the farmer and his wife were discussing the acquisition of some new land Thomé had in view.

"Ah! Anna, how are you?" exclaimed Thomé in genial tone. "The most stylish girl of her day; no offense to Luiza."

"We all know which of the two you chose," replied Anna."

"You know you were already entangled by that good soul, John Védor."

"And you got your precious jewel," said Anna, turning to Luiza, who smiled graciously.

"What saint brought you here?" asked Thomé.  
"Will you have some breakfast?"

"I have just had mine, but Heaven knows what it cost me."

"Are you ill? And how is Clemente? You know Luiza and I already consider him as ours."

"Gently, gently; better not form a habit you will have to give up."

"I don't understand you."

"I tell you, you will have to look higher."

"Anna, speak out clearly. Bread is bread, and cheese is cheese."

"Then here goes; the marriage between your daughter and my son is at an end."

"Why so?"

"Because Bertha's inclination does not lie in that direction."

"Did Bertha ever say such a thing? To whom — to Clemente?"

"Yes, she did ; she told him her heart belonged to another."

"To whom, for gracious sake?"

"Thomé, do you not suspect?"

"I? What?"

"It is a person who comes here often."

"There, Thomé! what have I always said?" burst forth Luiza, clasping her hands.

"Oh! be quiet, wife. Say on, Anna."

"What did you suspect, Luiza?" asked Anna.

"That they liked one another," said Luiza.

"They — who?"

"Our girl and" —

"Do hush, Luiza," said her husband.

"And who else?" repeated Anna.

"And the fidalgo's" —

"Jorge? Yes, you have guessed."

"Guessed what?" shouted Thomé. "You, Anna, are just as crazy as my wife. Who ever put such an idea into your head?"

"It was Jorge himself."

"Jorge! I do not wish to offend you, but this is too incredible. Didn't he make the proposal for your son?"

"Yes, he did ; but I also know that every time

Clemente spoke to him about it, he flew into a passion. Now he looks like a corpse; and Bertha confessed to Clemente, and then he guessed who it was, and I spoke up plainly to Jorge, and he could not deny it."

"If this is true," said Thomé, slowly pacing the room, "it is a great misfortune indeed."

"There you go, sounding a funeral chime. What great misfortune is there in this?"

"You seem to have no idea of what will come out of it, Anna. Remember that in this romance I and the old fidalgo are also mixed up."

"What of that?"

"I do not care to think of the consequences. The old man will think as I should in his place, perhaps, that this was a deep laid plan of mine, getting his son here. What a shame! and what blindness in me! And yet they hardly ever spoke to each other."

"But I suspected it," said Luiza.

"It is not to be thought of. I would sooner put my daughter in a convent. Why, how could I look the old man in the face, as I did lately — thank God! — with him suspecting me of these intrigues?"

“If your conscience is clear, why do you care?”

“I only wish I had the girl back from Bacellos. Little I thought when I took her there what my action might seem like.”

“Oh! let the girl alone. God, who orders these things, knows what He is about. You know the old man cannot bear your daughter out of his sight.”

“I am not to be humbugged by these things. This very day Bertha shall return to the Herdade. If your son will not have her — patience, I will never force her.”

“Oh! you need not take such pains to separate the lovers; they do it of their own accord. The danger does not lie there; it is that Jorge is pining away — and how long will your daughter last if he dies?”

“The Lord save us!” exclaimed Luiza.

“What would you have me do, Anna? In all those years you lived in that family, don’t you know the temper of the old noble?” asked Thomé.

“Much I care about his temper. He’ll only last a year or two, and you make a boy and girl unhappy for their lives on account of his temper.”

“Say what you please, I am going to Bacellos

and shall not return without the girl," and he left the room, muttering, "What a misfortune! what a misfortune!"

Anna shook her head in a kindly, threatening manner. "Yes, you are obstinate; but you will find that I have been beforehand in the matter."

Luiza fell on her neck, weeping.

"What are you crying about? Bear up; you shall see your daughter married and happy. I must get ahead of Thomé, so good-by," and Anna took her leave.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT.

SINCE Bertha had spoken of her marriage, the time had not passed so pleasantly. The fidalgo was troubled by the thought that perhaps he ought to give his consent, and yet he had not the courage to deprive himself of what had become so necessary to him. By tacit consent the subject was avoided, yet each dreaded the impending separation.

On the day of the scenes mentioned in the last chapter, the old noble had been unusually depressed. While awaiting Bertha's return with a remedy she was preparing for him, a slight tap at the door aroused his attention, and in response to his "Come in!" Anna do Védor entered the apartment with her usual unembarrassed manner, and regardless of his ill-concealed annoyance, she said, "How are you, Fidalgo? rather weak, eh? Well, Snr. Don Luiz, old age is full of ailments."

“That is so. And what brings you here, Anna?”

Anna, noticing the lack of cordiality in the old man’s manner, grew less affable herself.

“In the first place, I came to see how you were ; I should have been here before this, if the cares of my house would have allowed ; I too am beginning to feel the weight of years. I have come also to find out when you can dispense with Bertha, so that her marriage with my son may be celebrated.”

“So you have come to get her?” asked Don Luiz, raising his voice.

“No, sir ; only to ask when she can come.”

“She is not my daughter ; she can go when she pleases. But I will have nothing to do with that marriage ! Take her — sacrifice her — only do not ask my consent to so preposterous a match. I have had enough remorse in my life.”

“What are you saying, Fidalgo? What is there preposterous in Bertha’s marrying my son?”

“Anna, no offense to your son, but he is not the husband for Bertha.”

“And where will you get a better one? If you tell me that you intend to marry her into your own family, I shall say the girl has found a much



better match than my son. I see your face changing. Well, if you have as high-born notions as ever, you had better let the girl marry an honest man, and do not go putting silly notions into her head."

Don Luiz, feeling that he was losing ground, said, "I should have nothing to say against the marriage if Bertha cared for your son."

"Did she not herself consent? I should like to know who obliged her?"

"She gave her consent to please others, but her heart did not go with it."

"So you think, Snr. Fidalgo, that even girls' hearts should be consulted in the matter of marriage?"

"Certainly. Such a heart as Bertha's is the best counselor; it neither deceives itself nor others."

"Now I have caught you," exclaimed Anna, in her impetuosity forgetting her usual deferential tone. "I would like you to know that this is no news to me, that Bertha does not care for my son; and he has no idea of accepting a wife without a heart. What I wanted to hear was what you have just said; now we will see how you will get out of the box you have got into. Do you know why

Bertha did not care for my son? It was because she loved another better. And do you know who the other is that Bertha's heart selected — 'that heart that never deceives?' — it is your son Jorge."

Don Luiz remained for some time staring at Anna in blank amazement.

"Jorge," he murmured almost inaudibly.

"Yes, sir; what do you say to this?"

"Jorge! Bertha!" repeated the old man, as if overpowered by the revelation. "Who told you this, woman?"

"Your son, amongst others."

"Jorge!" exclaimed the fidalgo, trembling with rage. "Am I the victim of an infamous plot? This is maddening."

"What plot? This was the most innocent and natural thing in the world; the young man liked the girl and she liked him — that has been the way since Adam and Eve's time."

"Jorge! Oh, merciful heavens! Why have I had sons only to shame and torment me?"

"There you go! Just now my Clemente wasn't half good enough for Bertha, now you feel dishonored because your son loves her. That's a nice

kind of godfatherly love. I don't understand these 'vice-pin' friendships."

Don Luiz paid no attention to her words, so absorbed was he in turning over in his mind all the suspicious circumstances that told against the farmer. At last he rose from his chair, his countenance flushed with rage, and exclaimed, thrusting out his clinched hands, "I will crush every one of them if they come and insult me in my last days."

Anna strove in vain to calm the old man's fury.

"Leave me ; I will die here alone. I will have no one here."

At this moment the door opened, and Bertha appeared.

"What is the matter, Don Luiz ?" she asked.

"That is you, is it? You come to continue the work they have put upon you. Go! I do not wish to see any one. Leave me!"

Bertha stood for a moment as if transfixed, then turned and left the room, the tears starting to her eyes.

"O, sir," exclaimed Anna, now quite alarmed at this paroxysm, "you are beside yourself. Don't you see you have made the poor girl cry? How is she to blame, poor little thing?"

“Was she really crying?” asked Don Luiz.

“And well she may, by the way in which you spoke to her.”

The fidalgo sighed.

“What a fatality! Of course the poor little girl is not to blame. Leave me, Anna. I must be alone.”

“Well, then, God be with you!”

“Anna, if you see the young girl tell her to come to me.”

“Take care how you trouble the poor thing.”

“Do as I bid you, and have no concern.”

Anna’s parting words were, “If you do not wish to lose your son take care how you act in this matter,” and she left, feeling very doubtful of any good she had accomplished.

In a few moments Bertha returned, her eyes still full of tears.

“Come here, Bertha — come here, my child. This is the way I pay all your care of me. Well, this is madness in me, I fear.”

Bertha ran and knelt at his feet, and took his hands in hers.

“Don’t say that, Snr. Don Luiz; I know it was only the impatience of an invalid.”

Don Luiz took her face between his hands and looked at her closely.

"Poor child! I made you weep for others' faults; pardon me. It is impossible that you should be guilty," and he kissed her eyes where the tears seemed again starting.

"Pardon you! The only pain I have," said Bertha, "is to see you thus afflicted. I thought you were worse."

"No; but that woman who has just gone out has told me such things! Bertha, are you truly my friend?"

"What a question, my godfather."

"Then look at me, Bertha. When you came to me here at Bacellos, was it your father who bade you come?"

"My father read me the baroness' letter, saying she was leaving for Lisbon, and there was no one to look after you; and I instantly thought just as he had, and I asked his consent."

"Which he gave at once, of course?"

"Why, he had had the same idea."

"Oh! he had? And Jorge, did he have anything to say to it? I know he goes a great deal to your house."

Bertha began to grow uneasy under this cross-questioning.

“Snr. Jorge? He used to go a good deal to speak to father upon business matters. He was not consulted upon this subject that I know of.”

“You say he went sometimes; I thought he was on terms of the greatest intimacy in your family.”

“He very rarely spoke to any one but father.”

“Not with you?”

“Only occasionally, if we chanced to meet; and then he had such a way with him I thought he positively disliked me.”

“I did not expect this of you, Bertha. You are not frank with me. You conspire with the others against the tranquillity of my last days. God pardon you the harm you are doing me, for I really loved you!”

“O, Don Luiz! tell me plainly what you mean — what harm am I doing?”

“You must speak the truth, Bertha; why did you tell me Jorge disliked you?”

“I said I thought so, but” —

The fidalgo observed her increasing embarrassment and said, “Come, Bertha, calm yourself;

remember you have a friend in me. Open your heart to me. Did Jorge ever tell you he loved you? Was there ever any affection, any promise, between you two?"

"My godfather, don't you remember the request I made a few days since to you?"

"The request? Do you mean the marriage? Clemente's mother just told me it was not to be; that you and Jorge were in love with each other."

"How could she say such a thing?"

"It was Jorge told her."

"Jorge? Snr. Jorge? That's impossible!"

"Why don't you answer my question — what's the truth of all this?"

Bertha remained silent, as if collecting herself, and then with resolution and more animation, she said, "You are right, sir; I ought to tell you the truth. I do love your son, and I am not ashamed of it."

"So it is true?"

Bertha, with downcast eyes and trembling voice, but with an air of determination, proceeded:

"One day Snr. Jorge came to my father to ask him for my hand for Clemente."

"What! was it Jorge who made that proposal?"

And before this had he not given you to understand " —

"Do listen to me, Snr. Don Luiz; I will tell you the whole truth. Father called me to consult about the proposal."

"Oh! your father called you and expected you to refuse?"

"I had never thought about marrying, or of the future, so the proposal took me by surprise, especially coming as it did through Snr. Jorge."

"Ah! because he had sworn" —

"He had never sworn anything; he had scarcely spoken to me; seemed to wish to avoid me; and pained me so much that I tried to divine the cause of this estrangement. I was continually thinking about this, and studying him, and this was bad, I think."

"Why?"

"Because the closer I observed him the more I appreciated his noble qualities, and little by little my admiration, sympathy, respect, grew into" —

"Love," Don Luiz concluded her sentence.

"A folly," she added, "which I sought at once to put an end to."

"You are an angel," said Don Luiz, caressing her.



Bertha went on: "That proposal of marriage made for Clemente by Snr. Jorge seemed to me the decisive proof of his dislike to me, and it was then that being left alone with him for a few moments, I asked him what it was in me that made him dislike me so much?"

"And he?"

"Then," said Bertha, in evident embarrassment, "he confessed his love for me, which he had sought by every means to overcome; and as he would not run the risk of sacrificing another, he had avoided seeing me. But he found I had no less courage than he."

"Poor child," murmured Don Luiz.

"So that, I may say, was the first and last day of that love."

"And did your father know nothing of this?" inquired the suspicious old noble.

"We ourselves did not know it," replied the ingenuous girl.

Don Luiz again took the beautiful face of his goddaughter in both hands and kissed her brow paternally.

"You are worthy of noble birth," he said, with a sigh. "Your sacrifice is indeed a great one,

but you rightly divine that it is inevitable. In families like ours, there are certain traditional exigencies."

"But, Don Luiz, you seem to forget what I asked of you a few days since."

"Yes, yes! I remember, Bertha; but why carry your sacrifice so far as to marry a man you do not love?"

"It is an honorable man who asks me to be his companion. That is the destiny of women of our rank; it is our mission. I told all to Clemente, and he asked time to reflect. And now I see it cannot be."

There was silence for some time.

"This sacrifice is very hard for you, Bertha, is it not?"

"Why should I say it is not? But it would be harder still if my dream were realized, for I should then have remorse for having thus returned all the kindness I had received from your family. I should be ashamed lest they might suppose I had acted from interested motives. We have our pride, too, Snr. Don Luiz," she said, with a smile.

"And it is a noble one," answered he, more and more fascinated.

At this moment Frei Januario thrust his head in at the door.

“Thomé da Pova has come for his daughter,” he said.

“For me?” said Bertha, rising.

“Yes; and I believe he wishes to speak to the Snr. Fidalgo.”

“Let him come in,” said Don Luiz, with some asperity, and Thomé entered with a respectful air, but with the *brusquerie* habitual to him.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE BARONESS AGAIN.

“I HAVE come to get your permission to take my daughter home,” said Thomé after his salutation to the two.

Don Luiz’s only reply was a bitter cynical smile.

Thomé continued: “You see she is wanted at home; her mother is not quite well.”

“Is mother ill?” inquired Bertha anxiously.

“Not exactly ill, but you see there is a great deal of work at this season;” and with each sentence he studied Don Luiz’s gloomy and repelling countenance.

Suddenly the fidalgo exclaimed: “There! you may take her. You miscalculated your time; you see I am not entirely bewitched yet.”

“Either I do not understand you, or you mean to insinuate” —

“That you may take your daughter; her pres-

ence here does not advance your plans. My sons are not here, and I am too old to be misled."

The farmer's face betrayed the inward conflict he was undergoing. He took his daughter by the hand, and leading her to the door, said, "Go and get ready, while I talk with the fidalgo. And now," he said, returning, and standing before Don Luiz with his arms crossed, "I am ready to hear what you accuse me of."

"If in my words there seemed anything like an accusation, your own conscience must confirm it."

"Pray let us be frank," said Thomé; "if you will not speak out I will, and to the point. This morning — only this morning," he repeated emphatically, "some one came to my house — she probably came here too, from what I have gathered — and said" —

"Excuse me; I do not care to hear what is said in other people's houses."

"Very well," said Thomé, "I will tell you, then, what was said in yours. You were told that your son Jorge and my daughter loved each other! I instantly foresaw all the deeply laid plans of which you would imagine me capable, and determined at any cost to get her away from here. I employed

subterfuge, until I saw that was unnecessary. And now, sir, I swear to you that I never was aware of any affection between my daughter and your son, and when I knew of it, I regarded it as a great misfortune. For the first time I repented of any little service I may have rendered Snr. Jorge. You must know how I love him. I have loved him ever since he was a little boy — and my daughter — well, you know she is my eldest girl. Loving them both as I do, I would sooner see them die than give my consent to their union. I have my pride too, and I solemnly swear to you, Fidalgo, that for my child to enter your family, it would be necessary — well, you would have to ask it of me as a favor — now you may judge if this is possible!” and Thomé stopped, exhausted with the great effort he had been making.

Don Luiz was about to reply, when Bertha entered.

“ Shall we go, father ? ”

“ Yes, my child.”

She approached her godfather.

“ Will you give me your blessing, sir ? ” she asked, as if fearing a refusal.

Don Luiz, without turning, stretched forth his

hand, which the young girl took and kissed. The old man was moved, but he would not give way in Thomé's presence. Bertha moved towards the door, where her father awaited her, but the fidalgo in a stifled voice called to her, and, turning to obey, she saw him extending his hand for a last adieu.

Thomé, much moved, hid himself behind the portière until the old fidalgo, gently releasing her, imprinted a kiss upon her forehead. "Go, my dear child; your sacrifice is great, but not greater than mine. Tell your father" — But perceiving Thomé half-hidden in the doorway, he raised his voice to say :

"Thomé, I have been unjust to you. Pardon me; old age and sickness have made me thus. I believe in your good faith, and I hope we shall all know how to do what duty demands. Farewell! You are right in having your daughter with you," and for the second time in his life, Don Luiz offered his hand to his former servant, who took it most cordially, as he always received any loyal demonstration.

When the sound of their footsteps had died away, the exhausted old man hid his face in his

hands, and in despairing tones exclaimed, "Now die — die alone, without family, or friends — alone with your rancor, passion, pride, if you will."

Frei Januario interrupted him in this soliloquy, but as he could get no word from his patron, he, too, departed.

Late that afternoon Don Luiz was assisted to bed almost in a lethargic state, which so alarmed the padre, who really loved the old fidalgo, in spite of all his faults, that he determined to let Jorge know his father's condition.

Frei Januario's note, with letters from Oporto informing him of the favorable issue of his lawsuit, reached Jorge at the same time. Also a letter from the baroness and Mauricio, informing him of their marriage, and their intention of soon visiting Bacellos.

Under the influence of these mingled feelings, Jorge, after writing a hasty note to Thomé, inclosing the news from Oporto, mounted his horse and rode at once to Bacellos. Arrived there he hastened to his father's bedside. He was greatly shocked at the old nobleman's condition. In alarm he took the hand lying on the outside of the clothes to ascertain if life were still there.



At the touch the old man started and opened his eyes; a feeble, tender smile parted his lips. "Is that you, Jorge? I did not hear you come in."

"Are you better?" asked Jorge, leaning over him.

His father shrugged his shoulders; as if his fate were a matter of perfect indifference; and then fixing his eyes upon his son, he inquired in turn, "And you?"

"I? I am well," he answered, somewhat surprised at this unusual solicitude.

"You look pale and ill;" and then, after another pause, still with his eyes fixed upon Jorge, he felt for his hand, and pressing it, he said, "You are a man, Jorge! Worthy of the name you bear and the family you represent!"

Jorge was more and more amazed at his father's words, and attributed them to delirium.

"To know how to sacrifice everything to duty is the most difficult lesson we have to learn — and you prove you have mastered it."

Jorge fixed a searching glance upon his father, but he closed his eyes and remained for some time as if in slumber. Then he asked, "How go the affairs of our house?"

Jorge informed him of the good news he had just received. A faint flush crossed the old man's face, and in feeble tones he murmured, "Has the term of this long probation finally arrived?"

Then he fell into a doze, and Jorge, seeing him asleep, left him to the care of the padre. All that day and night passed without any perceptible change. The next morning, at dawn, the household at Bacellos was aroused by the arrival of a long *côrtège* of servants and porters — the suite of the baroness and Mauricio, who were coming to fulfil their promise of a visit. Jorge ran to meet them. After the first moments of joyful reunion were over, the baroness exclaimed, "I see your imprudence continues, Jorge. You will never realize your great plans in this way; overworking yourself as you do."

"That is not it, Gabriella," said Mauricio; "Jorge has always studied and worked; what is killing him is the ridiculous idea that he can control his passions and sacrifice himself to some imaginary duty."

Jorge smiled. "I see that the communism of secrets is well established between the conjugal pair. But what occupies me to-day are the affairs of our house."

"Yes," returned his cousin, "I heard in Lisbon that the suit had gone in your favor, but perhaps you did not know that this prompt solution of it was owing to Mauricio's speaking to one of the chief judges, in whose hands it seemed to have come to a standstill?"

"Really?" said Jorge. "And how about your affairs, Mauricio?"

"I am almost certain of a position in the London or Berlin embassy."

"I do not despair of being Ambassadress some day," said Gabriella laughingly. "But where is Bertha? I do not see her."

"She has been gone several days. It is since then that my father has grown worse."

"Why did she go?"

"Thomé came for her; I do not know exactly why, and did not care to inquire."

"And I will be bound they told Uncle Luiz. I never saw such a set! Of course they have made him ill. Come, Mauricio, let us go and see him. God grant it is not too late to remedy the harm!"

Frei Januario rose as the trio approached the bedside. Gabriella drew aside the curtains, and all three gazed in silence, much impressed by the

air of serenity on the wasted countenance of the old man.

Gabriella knelt and took his hand in hers and kissed it. Mauricio knelt by her side. Don Luiz awoke with a start. "Oh! my children," he said, as he looked at one after another, half-raising himself on his tremulous arm. "God bless you! — as I do," and he fell back on the pillow. "Ah! Gabriella," he said, as she rose to support him, "at last the hour of release has come, I hope."

"Rather say the hour of resurrection. You shall see happy days yet. You have Jorge and Mauricio, me, and perhaps some one else — who knows?"

Don Luiz turned his eyes to his youngest son. "Mauricio, you are still very young, and are going to live in a world full of temptations. Never think lightly of the counselor God has given you."

"How can I if I worship her?"

The baroness smiled at him, and observed, "I neither fear contempt, nor believe in worship. We esteem each other and shall be happy, I trust; but this is not the time to discuss these matters. Father cannot bear much at present.

You and Jorge go and give the necessary orders to the servants ; I shall remain here."

The brothers understood that she wished to be alone with their father. Frei Januario, in a half-doze the other side of the bed, remained unperceived by Gabriella.

"I did not expect to find you without a nurse," she began.

Don Luiz sighed.

"Why did Bertha leave you ?"

He made no answer, but looked annoyed.

"Girls," began the baroness again, "are giddy things, after all !"

"Don't say that of Bertha ; she is an angel of self-sacrifice."

"Why should an angel abandon her post ?"

"Her father came for her." He paused a moment, then said, "That poor girl possesses a noble, heroic soul. Gabriella, Bertha came out victorious from a great struggle, but her heart was bleeding, and this was no place for her wounds to heal."

"Do speak out clearly, and not in this vague manner, dear Uncle."

"Bertha is an angel, but she has a woman's heart, susceptible as others."

“Oh ! I begin to understand ; I thought it was something much more serious.”

Don Luiz regarded his niece in astonishment.

“You cannot know, Gabriella, to what I refer.”

“O, yes, I do ; I discovered that secret long since. Bertha’s and Jorge’s secret.”

“And you gave it so little importance ?”

“As much as it deserved. Is that really the only reason of Bertha’s leaving here ?”

“It would have been imprudent for her to linger. They are both heroic, but it would only have led to more and possibly irremediable evil.”

“What forcible language you use for so simple an affair. Do you consider it such a terrible evil that they love one another ?”

“Gabriella, are you joking ?”

“No ; I never spoke more seriously in my life. What I consider a great evil is when I see two people attached to each other, whose characters are so unfitted to each other that there must be continual conflicts. All other inequalities, such as riches, social position, family, are easily gotten over when there is true love.”

“And you think it would be all in order that my son should marry Thomé da Povia’s daughter ?”

"If you wish me to speak truly, I should think it a very suitable thing."

Don Luiz impatiently moved his head. Gabriella continued :

"This state of things is just killing you, Uncle ; and Jorge is dying by inches. Believe me, the fate of your family is indissolubly bound up with Bertha, and is it worth sacrificing precious lives and brilliant prospects to a mere aristocratic whim ?"

"A whim ?"

"Yes ; you call it a duty imposed by the code of nobility, but true nobility demands that every action be consistent with it. By energy and perseverance Jorge is meeting this requirement, imagining that he can dispense with all other stimulus or help, and you for whom he makes this great sacrifice, are laying up for yourself a bitter remorse in allowing it."

"My life," said her uncle, "is one of sacrifices ; it is destiny ; I must accept it with resignation."

"That is not Christian. God never requires us to accept the evils we may avoid if we will curb our evil passions," said Gabriella.

"Evil passions !" exclaimed the excited fidalgo.

“How these modern ideas have blinded you, that you can call it evil passions — the respect we owe to the glory of our family!”

“And what glory could it lose by an alliance with Bertha? She is a girl of noble sentiments and excellent qualities. What our old families require is a mixture of just such blood, or they will all die out in the new order of things that is coming in.”

Don Luiz was becoming more and more impatient, when an unexpected turn was given by the interruption of Frei Januario, who had listened in much astonishment and horror to these disclosures and radical notions.

“Pardon me, Sra. Dona Gabriella,” exclaimed the padre, “but I must express my dismay at what I have just heard.”

“Oh! you were there, Frei Januario? I never thought of that.”

“I have been here night and day, and I remained here, as no one ordered me to leave. I am used to hearing and keeping family secrets. Snr. Don Luiz is right. Nobility is nobility, and woe to us if he forget his duties and mix himself with the lower classes.”



“Did you read that in the Scriptures, Frei Januario?”

“It is what experience has shown me. What would the world say — and your cousins — the Cruseiros, Ribeira-formosas — should Snr. Jorge make such a marriage? But you cannot be serious in proposing it.”

Here Don Luiz interrupted him. He found his cause espoused by one with whom he was no longer in sympathy, and this caused quite a revulsion of feeling.

“Hush! hush! Frei Januario. Do you think I care for what the Cruseiros or any of them say? And as to Bertha, they would have much to learn from her. To be noble, it is not sufficient to be a Cruseiro, or a Ribeira-formosa. The Cruseiro is a nest of drunkards, and the Ribeira-formosa of imbeciles. I certainly would not hesitate to choose between those people without dignity and those of humble origin, who are continually giving us lessons in duty. And how were noble families formed? They were not all of the same period. Some were noble and others not, but by noble actions a man may make himself the associate” —

Don Luiz found himself led further than he had

intended. Frei Januario was entirely overwhelmed, and Gabriella determined to leave her uncle to his own reflections, and telling him he ought to rest now, she took the chaplain's arm and left the room.

"When you have put in the leaven," she said, "cover the dough and leave it to rise in peace."

The padre did not understand the simile, and went off quite disconcerted, attributing all this heresy to the poison of Freemasonry.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE DANGEROUS LEAP.

MAURICIO met his wife as she left his father's room.

"How did you leave him?"

"Ill physically, but better mentally. Do you wish to begin your diplomatic life to-day?"

"How?"

"By going at once to Thomé da Pova's. Make him see the necessity of his allowing Bertha to return. He will make objections, but you can overcome them. And do not return without her."

"What are your plans?"

"To marry Jorge and Bertha."

"You will find that a difficult matter."

"Not so difficult as I had imagined. Unwittingly, the padre did us great service. He advocated the aristocratic cause with such warmth that he almost made a democrat of your father. And

now a few of Bertha's caresses will finish the matter. You men are so susceptible to such things."

"You think so?"

"Well, we shall see if I am mistaken."

Mauricio departed, and soon returned with Bertha, who at once took her accustomed place at the bedside of the invalid.

He was asleep when she arrived; an uneasy, restless sleep; and as Bertha wiped his heated brow he opened his eyes, and a joyful smile passed over his features, but he said nothing.

"Are you better?" she asked, bending over him.

Extending his wasted, burning hand to her he said, much moved, "So you have returned?"

"I heard you had been very ill."

"It is well; I should not like to die without taking leave of you."

"Oh! do not talk of dying. Spring is here, and we will have our walks in the garden before long."

Don Luiz smiled sadly, and the tears started to his eyes.

"You may weep," she said, "as much as you please. We are alone; these tears will be a relief."

At these words it seemed as if the pent-up

springs were loosened, and for a while quietly streamed down his cheeks. At length he fell into a tranquil sleep. His condition was still very alarming, and the news spread through the village that the end was very near for the lord of Casa Mourisca. For three days the family were kept in hourly anticipation of the dreaded event. At the end of that time he awoke one night from a pleasant dream — very different from those which had disturbed his slumbers. He seemed to have had a vision of his daughter; sometimes it was Beatrice and again it was Bertha. All was silence in the room, save for the ticking of the clock. He laid awake endeavoring to recall the pleasant impressions of the dream, when he suddenly became aware of some one breathing gently. Turning, he saw Bertha, who, overcome with weariness, had fallen asleep at his bedside. Don Luiz remained contemplating her. The rays of the night lamp fell upon her face, which wore an expression of serenity of spirit. A stray lock fell over her brow and between the lovely fingers of the hand which supported her head, partly leaning against the pillows.

Raising himself gradually to obtain a better

view of that sweet face, it seemed to him a supernatural vision. It might have been hours that that silent contemplation lasted. At length he murmured, "Why are you watching by me? What ties bind you to me? And is this abnegation not to be rewarded? Beatrice if she were alive would call you sister, and I — why should I not call you daughter?" and bending over the unconscious girl, he gently kissed her forehead.

At dawn, when Bertha awoke, she was alarmed at seeing her godfather evidently disturbed, and to her anxious questioning as to the cause he did not directly reply. Taking her hand with deep emotion, he murmured, "Call Jorge; I must speak to him directly."

She went, but her agitation and alarm communicated itself to the entire household. The news soon spread through the neighborhood that the fidalgo had summoned his son to take a last farewell, and the old dependants of the family — Anna do Vêdor, Thomé and Luiza — hastened to Bacellos to offer their sympathy and services.

Jorge hastened to his father's bedside with trembling steps.

"Is that you, Jorge?"

“Yes, father.”

“Come nearer,” and fixing upon his son a look still full of life and expression he said, after a pause, “You are not happy, Jorge?”

Jorge looked at his father in amazement.

“You have a noble soul; you took upon your shoulders a most difficult task, and as if that were not enough, you must sacrifice your warmest affections. The sacrifice is greater than you can bear.”

Jorge bowed his head. His father’s words, so different from what he had anticipated, seemed to deprive him of speech.

“Speak! You never did find a confidant in me, I know, but illness has broken my hard nature. You suffer, and I am the cause; is it not so? I know of the love that has grown in your heart, and I know also how faithfully you have striven against it in deference to my prejudices. I am proud of you! You have the true temper of a fidalgo! I no longer doubt the regeneration of our house. Jorge, my heart is no longer hard; it has become human, and the idea of your sacrifice has become intolerable to me. Be happy! and you are noble enough to ennoble any one who is allied to you.”

“Painful as is my sacrifice, father, it would be more painful to accept of yours. I respect your opinions, and that will be my compensation.”

“And what is to compensate her?”

“Her — Bertha? If I did not know what that noble heart is capable of, I should never have the courage to speak as I do.”

In the hesitation of the son Don Luiz fancied he perceived some pride of family, and he grew alarmed, fearing he might not carry his point, after all.

“No, Jorge,” and then closing his eyes for an instant as if to gain courage, he said, “the greatest sacrifice would be for me to have to give her up — out of pity for me” —

“What do you mean?” exclaimed Jorge. “Is it not on my account that you insist?”

“Will you force me to confess all my weakness? I acknowledge, then, that in making your own happiness you will make mine. The place of your sister could only be filled by Bertha; any one else would profane it.”

Jorge, hardly allowing him to conclude, seized his hands.

“Oh, thank you, father! It must be Heaven



inspires you; and the spirit of my sister counsels you. Now indeed the horizon clears; I can believe in happiness. Victory! Thanks, thanks!"

And again kissing his father's hand he made haste to call Bertha.

The family and friends assembled in the adjoining room, anxiously awaiting the result of the interview between the father and son, now hastened to the door. Jorge, almost beside himself, conducted Bertha to his father's couch. "Longer sacrifice is in vain, Bertha; my father will not accept it; he prefers to see us happy. Kneel and kiss your father's hand!"

Bertha obeyed with tears of joyful emotion. The baroness could not restrain an expression of joy and triumph, and Mauricio hastened to congratulate Jorge; Anna do Védor almost lifted Luiza off her feet; only Thomé da Povia stood silent and unmoved. For one moment, as he heard Jorge's words, and saw his daughter kneeling by his side, a gleam of pleasure passed across his face, but it gave way to sadness, and when the young man approached him with outstretched hands, he said, "It is hard for me to put an end to all this happiness; but it cannot be!"

All looked at the farmer in blank amazement.

"What do you mean?" cried the listeners.

"Honor and self-respect demand something, too. I have been suspected of intrigues unworthy of an honest man; better for us all to sacrifice our affections than bring worse evils," replied Thomé.

"What evils can you fear if I ask you to grant me Bertha's hand?" said Jorge.

"You are blinded by youthful passion and cannot see what I do."

"Don't be obstinate, Thomé," said the baroness; "resistance has ceased where it was most to be dreaded."

"Your ladyship would not speak thus if you knew all. A few days since, in this very room, I felt myself insulted at being accused of what had never entered my mind, and, exasperated at not being able to explain suspicious circumstances, which seemed to tell against me, I at last took a solemn oath"—

"Which was," interrupted Don Luiz, "that if the marriage of Jorge and his daughter depended upon his consent, he would never give it, even if it caused their deaths, unless Jorge's father—the Lord of Casa Mourisca—should ask it as a favor."

Thomé bowed in acquiescence, and looked at the baroness and the two brothers as if questioning whether he could yield after this.

“Very well,” said the fidalgo, after a short pause, closing his eyes as if about to take a dangerous leap, “I do ask you, Thomé da Povoá, as a favor to allow Bertha to become the wife of my son.”

Thomé had his eyes fixed on the old noble’s face. Seeing the gigantic effort he had made, he ran to the old man’s side and knelt, taking his hand.

“You have conquered, Snr. Don Luiz ; my pride could not demand more,” said the farmer. “Be happy, Bertha.”

All present were deeply moved. Jorge, taking Bertha by the hand, said to Thomé, “I accept the happiness you offer me, Thomé, but under certain conditions, that our future may not be clouded. Our estate, as you know, is not yet free, though it has entered on the right path. My pride is — for we all seem to have our pride — that I by my own arm shall redeem my fortunes. When I receive Bertha it must be in my own house, that it be not said that she opened its doors which were closed by

poverty. Therefore I must wait before I can realize all my happiness."

"Very good, Jorge," exclaimed the fidalgo, his face radiant with joy.

"That is all fair," Thomé agreed; "I have nothing to say against that."

"And there is something more," said Jorge; "I can accept my wife and be proud of an alliance with so honorable and generous a family, but what I cannot accept without humiliation is any part she may have in her paternal inheritance. My aristocratic scruples reach that far, I will confess."

"Excellent, Jorge," again said his father; "with such ideas you may transmit nobility, but never lose it."

"But I am not going to disinherit my daughter," said Thomé coldly, "I do not agree to that."

"My part," said Bertha shyly, "I could give to my brothers."

"Your brothers do not require you to give it up." The baroness now interposed.

"These minor details are of secondary importance; do let us leave them for some other time."

"You are quite right, my lady," seconded Anna do Védor. "Let them be married; the rest will

take care of itself. But the fidalgo! — the fidalgo! Who would ever have thought he would come round like that! I am sure the Lord will give him health after this. And you, Luiza, what do you say to this? You certainly had a saint to pray for you! And between ourselves, I can just tell you that perhaps you owe something to me! And you, Bertha, though you did refuse my Clemente, I do not bear you any ill-will; I would have done the same in your place. And you, Thomé, with your nose still in the air, what more would you have, man?"

Mauricio approaching Anna, with a smile, said, "You seem to be passing round compliments, when is my turn coming?"

"You think because you are married, you deserve something more. The only wonder is you found any one to have you. Excuse me, my lady, but I do not envy you your choice; some day you will find out the jewel you have got! That one there is of another mould," she said, pointing to Jorge.

All laughed at the old nurse's frank remarks.

While they were thus engaged, Frei Januario entered.

"Anything new?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," Anna do Védor answered; "you may prepare to read the marriage service for this happy pair. Marry them well! do you hear?"

"Why? — are — all" —

"All the obstacles are removed," said the baroness.

The lawsuit was at last decided in Jorge's favor. He was no longer hampered in carrying out his views in the contemplated reformation of his hitherto mismanaged estate.

Borrowing from the most reliable corporation in the country, the "Land Credit," on the most advantageous terms, he was able gradually to redeem all obligations, Thomé's being the last.

The venerable, melancholy mansion soon began to renew its youth. The simple villagers rejoiced to see the open windows, the noble avenue cleared of weeds, the fountains again at play, as in former days, and applauded the energy which had brought about such a happy state of things. The old fidalgo could now return to his ancestral home without humiliation. The long retinue of servants assembled to receive him with enthusiastic

greeting, gratified his ineradicable, but natural pride, and moved him deeply.

Shortly after his return the marriage of Jorge and Bertha was solemnized in the Chapel of Casa Mourisca, in the presence of the baroness and Mauricio, who arrived for the occasion. The former, with her usual tact, had been able to induce Jorge and his future father-in-law to agree to a settlement which could humiliate neither party, and the good Luiza was dissolved in tears of joy at seeing her husband overflowing with satisfaction.

The noble relatives looked with scorn upon the "mésalliance," as they were pleased to term it, refusing to countenance it — nor were they asked to do so.

Frei Januario, finding the larder of the new establishment well supplied, resolved quietly to conform to the new order of things.

Mauricio before long was offered the post of attaché to the Viennese Embassy, under the most promising auspices. Both himself and wife thoroughly enjoyed the excitement and pleasures of metropolitan life. It is but just to say that their tastes proving so similar, the baroness never repented of her romantic marriage.

Jorge's life was a complete contrast to his brother's, divided as it was between the cares of his household and estate. Thanks to his example, many of the old customs and prejudices, which had so long by obstructing the introduction of modern agricultural improvements kept Portugal in the rear of advancing civilization, were discarded.

His whole life was an eloquent protest against the negligence and extravagance of the neighboring proprietors.

Would that more of them were following in his steps; that the wealth and prosperity hidden beneath Portugal's soil might be utilized, and her people stand before the world as worthy of the age in which they live, and of their inheritance in the field of European progress! It was thus that by the intelligent employment of capital upon his land, Jorge fulfilled the legend of Casa Mourisca, and discovered its long-predicted hidden treasure.

And here we close our simple tale, merely adding that Anna do Védor's energy has not yet succumbed to the weight of years; that Clemente has married a good girl, better suited to him than his first contemplated companion, and who



will one day worthily fill her mother-in-law's place.

The lords of Cruseiro, continuing their reprobate mode of life, are more and more despised by their humble neighbors, while the "Fidalgos of Casa Mourisca" are gaining rapidly the esteem and admiration of all who know them, and making for themselves an honorable name in popular tradition.









